University of St-Andrews

INTERPRETING THE BREAK-UP OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA, 1992

Degree of Ph.D

Magali Perrault

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ABSTRACT

On 31 December 1992 at midnight, hardly more than three years after the collapse of communism, Czechoslovakia broke up, to be replaced by two successor states, the Czech Republic and Slovakia.

This dissertation seeks to explain why the Czechoslovak state, which emerged on the European map in October 1918, following the first World War and the disintegration of the Habsburg Empire, disappeared in the post-Cold War era.

The rapidity of this "velvet", entirely peaceful, divorce has been interpreted by observers such as Frédéric Wehrlé, Jacques Rupnik and Eric Hobsbawm, as evidence of the artificial and ephemeral nature of a state founded on the union of two distinct nations, the Czechs and Slovaks.

Much of the existing literature (such as the works of the Slovak-born Canadian scholar Stanislav J. Kirschbaum) stresses the unrelenting character of Slovak demands for self-determination and consequently sees the break-up of 1992 as the ineluctable and definitive outcome of a long historical trend (what could be defined as a "historical necessity").

The thesis will however challenge this view and argue that the division of Czechoslovakia was not inevitable, but rather the result of the complex interactions between democratisation and Czech and Slovak nationalisms after 1989.

This dissertation seeks to prove that Czechoslovakia was not destined to dissolve by referring to several concepts and approaches widely used in international relations and in area studies of Central and Eastern Europe: political culture, the economics of secession, nationalism (and especially the interactions between the competing Czech and Slovak national identities), federalism, political elites, communism, as well as democratic transition (in a multinational setting).

While the recent character of the events obviously has to be taken into account, unlike previous attempts to examine the events of 1989-1992 by focusing on a single explanatory factor (political-cultural, economic or legal-institutional), this work endeavours to analyse the dissolution of the state through a multifaceted and pluri-dimensional approach.

I, Magali Perrault, hereby certify that this thesis, which is approximately 100,000 words in length, has been written by me, that it is the record of work carried out by me and that it has not been submitted in any previous application for a higher degree.

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I was admitted as a research student in October 1997 and as a candidate for the degree of Ph.D in September 1998; the higher study for which this is a record was carried out in the University of St-Andrews between 1997 and 2000.

Date 26/05/2001 Signature of candidate

I hereby certify that the candidate has fulfilled the conditions of the Resolution and Regulations appropriate for the degree of Ph.D in the University of St-Andrews and that the candidate is qualified to submit this thesis in application for that degree

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All remaining mistakes are of course mine.

INTRODUCTION

On 31 December 1992 at midnight, hardly more than three years after the collapse of communism, Czechoslovakia broke up, to be replaced by two successor states, the Czech Republic and Slovakia.

This dissertation seeks to explain why the Czechoslovak state, which emerged on the European map in October 1918, following the first World War and the disintegration of the Habsburg Empire, disappeared in the post-Cold War era.

The rapidity of this "velvet", entirely peaceful, divorce has been interpreted by observers such as Frédéric Wehrlé, Jacques Rupnik and Eric Hobsbawm, as evidence of the artificial and ephemeral nature of a state founded on the union of two distinct nations, the Czechs and Slovaks[1].

Much of the existing literature (such as the works of the Slovak-born Canadian scholar Stanislav J. Kirschbaum) stresses the unrelenting character of Slovak demands for self-determination and consequently sees the break-up of 1992 as the ineluctable and definitive outcome of a long historical trend (what could be defined as a "historical necessity")[2].

1Eric Hobsbawm, *Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century, 1914-1991* (London; Michael Joseph; 1994), p.31 and 33; Jacques Rupnik, "The Reawakening of European Nationalisms", *Social Research*, Spring 1996, vol.63, n°1, p.41. For obvious reasons of time and given the recent character of the events, only a small number of monographs on the division of Czechoslovakia have been written in Western languages. These include Eric Stein's *Czechoslovakia: Ethnic Conflict, Constitutional Fissure, Negotiated Breakup* (Ann Arbor; The University of Michigan Press; 1997) and Frédéric Wehrlé's *Le Divorce Tchéco-slovaque: Vie et Mort de la Tchécoslovaquie, 1918-1992* (Paris; L'Harmattan; 1994). There are in addition several collections of essays specifically on the break-up, the most significant being: Jiří Musil (ed.), *The End of Czechoslovakia* (Budapest; Central European University Press; 1995); Rüdiger Kipke and Karel Vodicka (eds), *Abschied von der Tschechoslowakei: Ursachen und Folgen der tschechisch-slowakischen Trennung* (Köln; Verlag Wissenschaft und Politik; 1993); Viktor Knapp and Sergio Bartole (eds), *La Dissoluzione della Federazione Cecoslovacca* (Torino; La Rosa Editrice; 1994); and Serge Regourd (ed.), *Etudes Tchécoslovaques: La Partition (1er Janvier 1993)* (Toulouse; Presses de l'Institut d'Etudes Politiques de Toulouse; 1993).

2See, for instance Stanislav Kirschbaum, "Czechoslovakia: The Creation, Federalization and Dissolution of a Nation-State", *Regional Politics and Policy*, 1993, vol.3, n°1, pp.69-95 ; "La Fin des Mythes ? La Tchécoslovaquie et les Slovaques", *Revue d'Europe Centrale*, tome 1, n°2, 2nd Semester 1993, pp.147-156 ; "Les Racines du Nationalisme Slovaque Moderne", *Canadian Slavonic Papers*, vol.XXXVII, Nos3-4, Sept-Dec. 1995, pp.301-319; *A History of Slovakia: The Struggle for Survival* (New York; St-Martin's Griffin; 1995); *Slovaques et Tchèques: Essai sur un nouvel aperçu de leur histoire politique* (Lausanne; L'Age d'Homme; 1987).

The thesis will however challenge this view and argue that the division of Czechoslovakia was not inevitable, but rather the result of the complex interactions between democratisation and Czech and Slovak nationalisms after 1989.

This dissertation seeks to prove that Czechoslovakia was not destined to dissolve by referring to several concepts and approaches widely used in international relations and in area studies of Central and Eastern Europe: political culture, the economics of secession, nationalism (and especially the interactions between the competing Czech and Slovak national identities), federalism, political elites, communism, as well as democratic transition (in a multinational setting).

Unlike previous attempts to examine the events of 1989-1992 by focusing on a single explanatory factor (political-cultural, economic or legal-institutional[3]), this work endeavours to analyse the dissolution of the state through a multifaceted and pluri-dimensional approach - thus taking into account the formidable institutional diversity which characterised the short existence of the country.

Czechoslovakia experienced numerous types of political regimes: parliamentary democracy (1918-1938 and of course 1989-1992), "semi"-democracy (1945-48 and arguably also 1938-39), Nazi domination (1939-45), and communism (itself fluctuating from the Stalinism of the early years to the "normalisation" of the seventies and eighties, via the reformist interlude and the socialism with a "human face" of the Prague Spring in 1968).

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[3]For examples of the politico-cultural approach, see ch.2 ; For economic approaches, see for instance Petr Pavlínek, "Regional Development and the Disintegration of Czechoslovakia", *Geoforum*, vol.26, n°4, 1995, pp.351-372 ; Oldrich Dedek (ed.), *The Break-Up of Czechoslovakia: An In-Depth Economic Analysis* (Aldershot; Avebury; 1996) ; Aleš Čapek and Gerald W. Sazama, "Czech and Slovak Economic Relations", *Europa-Asia Studies*, vol.45, n°2, 1993, pp.211-235 ; Milica Zarkovic Bookman, "Economic Issues Underlying Secession: the Case of Slovenia and Slovakia", *Communist Economies and Economic Transformation*, vol.4, n°1, 1992, pp.111-134 ; Ivo Bicanic, "The Economic Causes of New State Formation During Transition", *East European Politics and Societies*, vol.9, n°1, Winter 1995, pp. 2-21.
Examples of institutional / legal approaches are to be found, in addition to Stein (*Czecho/Slovakia*), in, among others, Karen Henderson, "Czechoslovakia: The Failure of Consensus Politics and the break-up of the Federation", *Regional and Federal Studies*, vol.5, n°2, Summer 1995, pp.111-133 ; Lloyd Cutler and Herman Schwartz, "Constitutional reform in Czechoslovakia: *E Duobus Unum* ?", *University of Chicago Law review*, 1991, vol.58, pp.511-553 ; Holly Osterland, "National Self-Determination and Secession: the Slovak Model", *Case Western Reserve Journal of International Law*, vol.25, Summer 1993, pp.655-702; Katarina Mathernova, "Czecho?Slovakia: Constitutional Disappointments", in A.E. Dick Howard (ed.), *Constitution Making in Eastern Europe* (Washington D.C.; The Woodrow Wilson Center Press; 1993) pp.57-92 ; Jon Elster, "Transition, Constitution-Making and Separation in Czechoslovakia", *Archives Européennes de Sociologie*, tome XXXVI, n°1, 1995, pp.105-134.

Similarly, the relations between Czechs and Slovaks evolved according to constitutional changes and the state gradually lost its unitary character to become increasingly marked by the Czech-Slovak divide (ultimately recognized by the federalisation of January 1969).

The purpose (unlike the studies published by Valerie Bunce, Carol Skalnik Leff, Reneo Lukic and Allen Lynch, or Soren Rinder Bollerup and Christian Dons Christensen[4]) is not to develop a general and inductive theoretical framework (necessarily partial) or a comparative approach. The underlying assumption of this thesis is instead the conviction that Czechoslovakia is a valuable case study in the dissolution of a multinational state in its own right, and one which has been so far understudied (even if the recent character of the events obviously has to be taken into account). International relations theory and comparisons will therefore be used only to the extent that they are deemed to provide a pertinent contribution to our understanding of the split.

The first part (and first chapter) of the dissertation starts by considering what has probably become the mainstream view of the division of the Czechoslovak state: the idea that the merging of the Czechs and Slovaks in a common state in 1918 was a deeply unnatural but pragmatic process, a "marriage of convenience" which was somehow bound to fail from the outset.

After having reviewed the (valuable) arguments which would tend to prove the inevitability of the division of the state, it will eventually be argued that this view is reductionist and cannot provide an explanation to the events of 1989-1993. The break-up of Czechoslovakia was not "historically necessary" and, contrarily to the claims of Slovak (but also some Czech) post-communist leaders, it was not the ineluctable result of the two nations' desire to exercise their right to self-determination.

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[4]Valerie Bunce, *Subversive Institutions: the design and the destruction of socialism and the state* (Cambridge, New York; Cambridge University Press; 1999); Carol Skalnik Leff, "Democratization and Disintegration in Multinational States: The Breakup of the Communist Federation", *World Politics*, vol.51, January 1999, pp.205-235; Reneo Lukic and Allen Lynch, *Europe From the Balkans to the Urals: The Disintegration of Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union* (Oxford; Oxford University Press; 1996); Soren Rinder Bollerup and Christian Dons Christensen, *Nationalism in Eastern Europe: Causes and Consequences of the National Revivals and Conflicts in Late-Twentieth Century Eastern Europe* (Basingstoke, London; MacMillan Press; 1997). See also Robert Kaiser's unpublished doctoral dissertation, *National Territoriality in Multinational, Multihomeland States: A Comparative Study of the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia* (unpublished PhD dissertation, Columbia University, 1988).

The union of the Czechs and Slovaks in 1918 could have appeared as a politically daring operation given the deep historical, linguistic, economic and social faultlines between the two peoples but the ideology of "Czechoslovakism" (the belief in the existence of a single and unified "Czechoslovak" national consciousness) at the root of the first republic of 1918-1938 was not necessarily as unrealistic as commonly assumed. Building a Czechoslovak identity under the democratic institutions of the interwar period was a possibility, had it not been for the rise of Nazi Germany and Hitler's ruthless determination to destroy the country in 1938/1939, hardly twenty years after its creation -too soon to allow any form of meaningful and enduring national integration between Czechs and Slovaks.

A second part (chapters 2, 3 and 4) therefore considers three foundational problems which have often been deemed to suggest the impossibility of maintaining a common state between Czechs and Slovaks, and subsequently contends that none of these three fixed elements can satisfactorily -on its own or even in combination- "explain" the dissolution of Czechoslovakia.

Chapter 2 examines the widespread notion that the essential differences between Czech and Slovak political cultures made their continuing coexistence in a common state impossible. Observers such as Jacques Rupnik, Otto Ulč, Martin Bútora, Zora Bútorová, Silvia Miháliková, Grigorij Mesežnikov and Soňa Szomolányi have argued that the democratic tradition of the Czechs contrasts sharply with the authoritarian leanings which tend to prevail among the Slovaks[5]. This manichean evaluation will be contested on at least two grounds: Czech political culture is not as intrinsically "democratic" as certain observers believe, and the concept of anti-democratic "exceptionalism" hardly presents an accurate picture and characterisation of the extremely complex Slovak political culture. Czechs and Slovaks had distinct political traditions but this did not make their common state obsolete and does not explain its break-up.

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[5]Jacques Rupnik, "Cultura Politica", in Václav Belohradsky, Pierre Kende and Jacques Rupnik (eds), *Democrazie da inventare: Culture politiche e stato in Ungheria e Cecoslovacchia* (Torino; Edizioni della Fondazione Giovanni Agnelli; 1991), p. 9; Otto Ulc, "Czechoslovakia's velvet divorce", *East European Quarterly*, Fall 1996, vol.30, n°3, pp. 331-353; Sona Szomolányi and Grigorij Mesežnikov (eds), *The Slovak Path of Transition - To Democracy ?* (Bratislava; Slovak Political Science Association; 1994).

Chapter 3 considers the economic aspects of the division of Czechoslovakia and the long-lasting economic inequalities between the developed, early-industrialised Czech lands and the traditionally more backward Slovakia.

Contrary to an important trend in the literature on the break-up (illustrated by the writings of Petr Pavlínek, Aleš Čapek and Gerald Sazama, Milica Zarkovic Bookman and Ivo Bićanić)[6], it will be argued that the economic divergences between Czechs and Slovaks also appear to have a limited explanatory power.

Under the communist regime, according to official statistical records, a genuinely successful process of economic and industrial equalisation between the two regions had taken place and in 1989, the Czechs and Slovaks had, at least in this respect, never been so close from each other. The hardships of the economic transition nevertheless made it paradoxically possible for Czech and Slovak "ethnic entrepreneurs" to play with the insecurities and fears of their respective constituencies -creating to a large extent an environment where *perceptions* mattered more than realities.

More or less justified talks of Slovak economic specificity and of the necessity to adopt a path of economic reform more sensitive to Slovak national interests were matched on the Czech side by the dominant and intransigeant neo-liberal rhetoric of politicians such as Václav Klaus but, ultimately, economic considerations were at best instrumental to the break-up of Czechoslovakia and, in this specific case at least, separatism (especially in Slovakia) was only loosely connected with the notion of material interest.

Chapter 4 discusses what will be termed the "geopolitical argument", i.e. the idea that Czechoslovakia was a fragile state, whose cohesion and integrity was bound to be questioned after each shift in the international system. As William V. Wallace wrote,

> the original marriage, however well-meant, was practically and contractually flawed, in need of greater internal and external understanding than circumstances allowed, and

---

[6]See footnote n°3

likely to end in divorce as soon as the external constraints that held it together were removed[7].

This seemingly triggered the two break-ups of the country -in 1939, when "Czechoslovakism" proved a sham in front of Hitler's divisive strategies but also (according to Wallace, Judy Batt, Jacques Rupnik or Frédéric Wehrlé)[8] in 1992, after the end of the Cold War.

In the context of the "new world order" and the apparent decline of the traditional German, Hungarian and Soviet/Russian threats, many Czechs and Slovaks felt that there was at last a window of opportunity to achieve independence on their own. While more and more Czechs thought that getting rid of the allegedly less "democratically"-oriented and economically developed Slovaks would allow them to "return" faster into Europe, Slovak nationalists and demagogues presented Slovakia's first genuine independence as the fulfilment of a long process of national emancipation.

The end of Czechoslovakia in 1992 was not however a direct result or consequence of the changing international environment: international aspects only played a minor, "supporting" role in the dissolution of the Czechoslovak federation and did not make it inevitable. The international community conditioned the (peaceful) nature of the break-up more than the break-up itself.

Having hence shown why the political-cultural and economic differences between Czechs and Slovaks and the international environment all provide only partial and unsatisfactory explanations to the split, the dissertation's third part turns to an examination of the factors that ultimately led to the division of the state.

Firstly, the institutional context of post-communist Czechoslovakia deserves closer examination and chapter 5 considers how the divergent nature of the Czech and Slovak party systems contributed to the failure of the constitutional negotiations between 1989 and 1992.

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[7]W.V Wallace, "From Czechs and Slovaks to Czechoslovakia, and from Czechoslovakia to Czechs and Slovakia", in Seamus Dunn and T.G Fraser (eds), *Europe and Ethnicity: The First World War and Contemporary Ethnic Conflict* (London and New York; Routledge; 1996), p.47.

[8]Judy Batt, *The New Slovakia: National Identity, Political Integration and the Return to Europe* (London; The Royal Institute of International Affairs; 1996), p.2; Jacques Rupnik, "The International Context", in Musil, *The End*, pp.271-278.

Secondly and relatedly, the role and responsibility of the Czech and Slovak post-communist leadership in the break-up of Czechoslovakia is assessed (ch.6). Different personalities could have meant a different outcome (the preservation of its integrity?) for Czechoslovakia. A typology of post-communist Czech and Slovak elites will distinguish between what will be referred to as the "postcommunist dissident elite" represented by Václav Havel and the "technocrats" or "professional politicians" such as Václav Klaus and Vladimír Mečiar, who gradually superseded them on the political landscape. The postcommunist dissident elite, and most notably Havel, failed to realise the importance of the Slovak question and to give it the priority it deserved in the aftermath of the velvet revolution but the most important share of the blame should be ascribed to the "professionals", and especially Klaus and Mečiar who were determined to uncompromisingly pursue their own separate political agendas at the price of a state, whose citizens (Czechs and Slovaks) still thought well worth preserving[9].

Even more essential to an understanding of the division of the state is the resurgence of nationalism after 1989, examined in chapter 7.
Slovak nationalism, skilfully manipulated and electorally exploited by the pragmatic Mečiar played a decisive role in the events leading to the split, even if the impact of the quasi-simultaneous and reactive outburst of Czech nationalism, albeit under the somehow more "respectable" disguise of Klaus's neoliberal rhetoric, should clearly not be underestimated.
Chapter 8 looks at the negative economic, political, "semantic" and institutional legacies of communism on the Czech-Slovak relations and considers -as the Polish intellectual Adam Michnik wrote, borrowing from Lenin- why nationalism was *bound* to become, in Czechoslovakia like in the rest of the former Soviet bloc, the "highest stage of communism"[10].

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[9]Opinion polls consistenly show the support of both Czechs and Slovaks for the maintenance of a common state and it should be pointed out that just before the elections of 1992, as many as 81 percent of the respondents in the Czech Republic and 63 percent in Slovakia declared themselves opposed to the split. Figures in Carol Skalnik Leff, *The Czech and Slovak Republics: Nation versus State* (Boulder and Oxford; Westview Press; 1997), p.137

[10]quoted in Jacques Rupnik, *L'Autre Europe: Crise et Fin du Communisme* (Paris; Editions Odile Jacob; 1990, 1993), p.412.

The tendency of the communist regime to resort to an opportunistic strategy of divide-and-rule in blatant contradiction to its Marxist-Leninist "internationalist" ideals aggravated the mutual grievances between Czechs and Slovaks (even if it did not *create* them).

Finally, the fourth and final part of the thesis (chapter 9) aims to broaden the analysis of the Czecho-slovak divorce by providing an insight into the arena and the "rules of the game" of Czechoslovak ethnopolitics and examining the "system" itself as an additional layer-of-explanations.

The break-up of Czechoslovakia was not inevitable but the analogy of balance of power is used to suggest that the system "Czechoslovakia" was intrinsically unstable, because of its (Czech *and* Slovak) bi-polarity. Political bargaining and the search for a constitutional arrangement after 1989 was made more difficult for two essential reasons.

Firstly, the powers of the federal, "Czechoslovak", centre were gradually eroded in the post-communist era and the bipolarity of the state less and less allowed it to appear as a credible partner of the two increasingly assertive federal republics, the Czech republic and Slovakia.

Secondly, bipolarity implied that the Czechs and Slovaks became each other's "constituting others". The two nations tended to define themselves in opposition to one another, not merely Czechs *and* Slovaks, but more and more often, Czechs *versus* Slovaks - hardly a recipe likely to lead to an easy consensus, especially given the conspicuous unwillingness of the dominant Czech and Slovak elites to compromise and their exploitation and ethnicisation of mutual grievances.

Carol Skalnik Leff, following Claus Offe, emphasises that Czechoslovakia after 1989 had simultaneously to manage a difficult "triple transition"[11]: a political transition from communism towards the establishment of democracy and a dynamic civil society (rule of law), an economic transition from a planned socialist economy toward capitalism and free market and, last but not least, an "identity-seeking" (or national) transition.

There were some deep-rooted historical contentions, what Joseph Rothschild calls "ethnic markers"[12], between Czechs and Slovaks but the causes of the break-up of 1993 are probably

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[11]Leff, *The Czech*, p.135; Claus Offe,"Capitalism by Democratic Design ? Democratic Theory Facing the Triple Transition in East Central Europe", *Social Research*, vol.58, N°4, Winter 1991, pp.865-892.

[12]Joseph Rothschild, *Ethnopolitics: A Conceptual Framework* (New York, Guildford; Columbia University Press; 1981), pp.26-27

much more hard-headed and "materialistic": essentially, the capacity of Slovak, but also Czech, elites to exploit the fears springing from the transition and the impossibility to overcome the legacies of communism.

For all these reasons, Oscar Jászi's observation about the disintegration of the Habsburg Monarchy[13] could be applied to the break-up of Czechoslovakia: the "velvet divorce" was to a large extent "*a tendency, not a fate*".
A *tendency*, because the Czech and Slovak nations are undoubtedly distinct and the struggle of the Slovaks to achieve a higher level of autonomy vis-à-vis the Czechs has been a constant during the seven decades of the Czechoslovak state. Not a *fate*, because, as this dissertation aims to demonstrate (and despite the systemic weakness of a bipolar state), Czechs and Slovaks could have surmounted their differences and signed a new "contract of marriage" in the post-communist era.

[13]quoted in François Fejtö, *Requiem pour un empire défunt: Histoire de la destruction de l'Autriche-Hongrie* (Paris; Seuil; 1993, 1988). Oscar Jászi, *The Dissolution of the Habsburg Monarchy* (Chicago and London; Chicago University Press; 1961- first publication, 1929).

PART I

CHAPTER 1

CZECHOSLOVAKIA: AN ARTIFICIAL STATE BOUND TO BREAK UP ?

> Lord, when I am writing about this Czechoslovak state, I always have the feeling that it is an illusion !
>
> Kornel Stodola, in his diary, February 1918[14]

In November 1989, the "Velvet revolution" put an end to 41 years of communist rule in Czechoslovakia[15]. The event was welcomed by a wave of optimism concerning the future of the country, qualified by some observers as "the most Western of the so-called East European countries"[16] and Czechoslovakia seemed in a good position to succeed its transition toward democracy and its "return to Europe".
However, in spite of these positive omens, at midnight on 31 December 1992, Czechoslovakia disappeared from the European maps, replaced by two successor states, the Czech and the Slovak republics.

The break-up of Czechoslovakia has often been interpreted as the ineluctable consequence of the artificiality of the peace treaties of 1918-1919, which merged two distinct nations, the Czechs and the Slovaks, into a common state. According to this view, the end of Czechoslovakia was inevitable because the Czechoslovak state created in 1918 was artificial and fragile, destined to failure from the outset.
To push the argument further, 1992 thus exemplifies not so much the end of the Europe of Yalta as the end of the Europe of Versailles. The creation of separate Czech and Slovak states has been perceived as the final, and long-delayed, stage of the dissolution of the Habsburg

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[14]quoted in Antoine Marès, *Histoire des Pays tchèques et slovaque* (Paris; Hatier; 1995), p.264

[15]The regime officially ended on 10 December 1989, when Gustáv Husák resigned from the state presidency and thus opened the way for the election of the first non-communist president since 1948. The non-communist dominated coalition executive led by (the former communist) Marian Čalfa governed until the first free post-communist parliamentary elections in June 1990.

[16]Timothy Garton Ash, *We the People: the revolutions of 1989 in Warsaw, Budapest, Berlin and Prague* (London; Granta; 1990), p.130

empire into ethnically homogeneous nation-states. For Eric Hobsbawm, Timothy Garton Ash, Jacques Rupnik or Frédéric Wehrlé, the break-up of Czechoslovakia should therefore be assessed as part of a general process that also provoked the tragic disintegration of another multinational (and no less artificial) state created in 1918 - Yugoslavia. As Hobsbawm writes,

> the national conflicts tearing the continent apart in the 1990s were the old chickens of Versailles once again coming home to roast...There was absolutely no historical precedent for or logic in the Yugoslav and Czechoslovak combinations which were constructs of a nationalist ideology which believed in both the force of common ethnicity and the undesirability of excessively small nation-states. All the southern slavs (=Yugoslavs) belonged to one state, as did the western slavs of the Czech and Slovak lands. As might have been expected, these shotgun political marriages did not prove very firm. Incidentally, except for rump Austria and rump Hungary, shorn of most - but in practice not entirely of all - their minorities, the new succession states, whether carved out of Russia or the Habsburg Empire were no less multinational than their predecessors...[17]

This would suggest that the merging of two distinct, even if related, nations in a common state was not justified by any objective criteria. Clearly, the implicit assumption here is that what differentiated the Czechs and Slovaks is more significant than what brought them together and this chapter considers the arguments (most of them extremely valuable) which would tend to confirm the inevitability of the break-up.

However, it will be contended that this conception is to a large extent reductionist and cannot adequately provide an explanation for the events of 1989-1993 which led to the dissolution of the country. The Czechoslovak state was not doomed from the start to failure and its break-up was not "historically necessary".
Czechoslovakia, as Rupnik points out, was born in the name of the idea of self-determination of the "Czechoslovak" nation, and died when Slovaks and Czechs decided to invoke the same

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[17]Hobsbawm, *Age,* p.31 and 33 ; see also Timothy Garton Ash, *History of the Present: Essays, Sketches and Despatches from Europe in the 1990s* (London, New York; Allen Lane, The Penguin Press; 1999), p.220 ; Rupnik, "The Reawakening", p.41; Wehrlé, *Le Divorce*, pp.21-36.

national self-determination in the post-communist era[18]: as this thesis however attempts to show, this does not imply that a Czechoslovak state was not viable in post-Cold War Europe.

The first section will hence examine just how "close" were the Czechs and the Slovaks in ethnic, geographical, linguistic as well as historical, cultural and economic terms, at the times of the foundation of Czechoslovakia in 1918.

The extent to which the new state was a "pragmatic" creation, which corresponded to the then interests of two small nations in need of a partner, as well as (perhaps more cynically *and* importantly) to those of their victorious protectors, especially France and the United States is subsequently assessed.

We then look at the failure of the idea of "Czechoslovakism" (the attempt to build a "Czechoslovak" identity) during the seven decades of coexistence of the Czechs and Slovaks in a common state, before considering how the break-up of Czechoslovakia and the subsequent establishment of two independent Czech and Slovak states could be said to fit the notion of national self-determination -"the right or aspiration of a group, which considers itself to have a separate and distinct identity to govern itself and to determine the political and legal status of the territory it occupies"[19].

Finally, it will be argued that the merging of Czech and Slovak identities into a "Czechoslovak" identity was a possibility, had it not been for three obstacles: the tragic interruption after only 20 years of the "state/nation-building" experiment in which the new state had been engaged, the unfortunate (even if not necessarily deliberate) Czech insentivity to Slovak demands, as well as the fact that by 1918, Czechs, but also Slovaks, had already reached a level of national consciousness that made the creation of a "Czechoslovak" identity extremely difficult.

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[18]Rupnik, "The Reawakening", p.41.

[19]Graham Evans (with Jeffrey Newnham), *The Penguin Dictionary of International Relations* (London; Penguin Books; 1998), p.497. For an assessment of Slovak claims to self-determination, see Holly A. Osterland, "National Self-Determination and Secession: the Slovak Model", *Case Western Reserve Journal of International Law*, summer 1993, vol.25,pp.655-702.

Two nations, two different historical, cultural and economic backgrounds

> Czechs and Slovaks are two distinct nations with many similarities
>
> Dušan Kovač[20]

Czechs and the Slovaks share a three-fold connection: they are ethnically, linguistically and geographically related[21]. Both peoples are Western Slavs speak mutually understandable languages and live in the same region of central Europe.
Yet, even the simple and straightforward affirmation of this three-fold connection appears unconvincing.

Firstly, the geographical proximity and "closeness" of the Czechs and Slovaks has to be nuanced because "mountains cut off much of Slovakia from the Czech lands"[22] and the Small or White Carpathians constitute a natural border between the two nations. This might seem irrelevant in a late twentieth century where communications have reached such a level of performance but it was clearly an hindrance to the establishment of contacts between Czechs and Slovaks in the nineteenth century. Until 1918, the Slovak economic, political and cultural life revolved around Budapest or Vienna more than around Prague (even if this started to change in the last decade of the nineteenth century with the activities in Prague of politicians or intellectuals like the professor at Prague University and future first president of

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[20]Dušan Kovác, "Czechs and Slovaks in modern history", in Mikuláš Teich (ed.), *Bohemia in History* (Cambridge; Cambridge University Press; 1998), p.364

[21]See for example Jan Mlynárik, "Geschichte der tschechisch-slowakischen Beziehungen", in Kipke and Vodicka, *Abschied,* p.16 ; Bruce Garver, "The Czechoslovak Tradition: An Overview", in Hans Brisch and Ivan Volgyes (eds), *Czechoslovakia: The Heritage of Ages Past, Essays in Memory of Josef Korbel* (Boulder, East European Monographs; New York, Columbia University Press; 1979), pp.25-56. The nature of the historical links between Czechs and Slovaks is discussed later.

[22]Owen Johnson, *Slovakia 1918-1938: Education or the making of a nation* (Boulder, East European Monographs; New York, Columbia University Press; 1985), p.15
He argues that this was a hindrance to the creation of a Czechoslovak awareness.

Czechoslovakia, Tomáš Masaryk[23] as well as the creation of organisations devoted to the promotion of Czech and Slovak rapprochement like *Československá jednota* or the publication of the monthly *Hlas* between 1898 and 1904). The Slovak railway network was for instance oriented towards Budapest, the connections with the Czech lands being limited to only two lines[24].

Secondly, and more problematically perhaps, the notion of "linguistic proximity" itself can be contested and has constituted a recurring subject of dissension between Czechs and Slovaks[25].

Before the codification in 1843/1844 by Ľudovít Štúr (1815-1856) of a Slovak literary language based on the dialect of central Slovakia, the Czechs and the Slovaks were sharing a common literary language, a form of Czech developed in the Bible of Kralice (1579-1588) and usually called *bibličtina.* The creation of a Slovak literary language, already attempted without success by the Catholic priest Anton Bernolák (1764-1813) at the end of the eighteenth century, has been traditionally described (and clearly rightly so) as a badly disguised blow to the concept of Czechoslovak unity. Czech or "Czechoslovak-oriented" Slovak scholars or politicians such as Ladislav Rieger, Karel Havlíček, Karel Kalak, Jan Kollár[26] and Pavel Šafárik, perceived Štúr's initiative as an unnecessary "schism"[27] between the two nations. A not insignificant part of the supporters of the "Czechoslovak idea" saw the adoption of a language more accessible to the common Slovak than the *bibličtina*, and

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[23]H.Gordon Skilling, *T.G. Masaryk: Against the Current, 1882-1914* (University Park, Pennsylvania; The Pennsylvania State University Press; 1994), pp.64-80

[24]Victor S. Mamatey, "The Development of Czechoslovak Democracy, 1920-1938", in Victor S.Mamatey and Radomír Luža (eds), *A History of the Czechoslovak Republic, 1918-1948* (Princeton; Princeton University Press; 1973), p.115.

[25]The most useful works on the gradual development of a Slovak literary language are probably Peter Brock 's *The Slovak National Awakening: an Essay in the Intellectual History of east central Europe* (Toronto and Buffalo; University of Toronto Press; 1976) and Hugh LeCaineAgnew, "Czechs, Slovaks and the Slovak Linguistic Separatism of the Mid-Nineteenth Century" in John Morison (ed.), *The Czech and Slovak Experience* (Basingstoke and London; MacMillan Press; 1992), pp.21-37. See also Kovác, "Czechs", pp.365-369.

[26]who edited in Prague in 1846 *Hlasové o potrebe jednoty splolecného jazyka pro Cechy, Moravany a Slováky* (Voices Supporting the need of a common language for Czechs, Moravians and Slovaks)

[27]This view was for example also adopted by one of the most important politicians of the First Republic, the (Slovak) agrarian Milan Hodža, in a work entitled *Ceskoslovenský rozkol* (the Czechoslovak schism) published in 1920.

therefore more efficient as a communication tool, at best as a pragmatic but in any case *temporary* solution to unite more firmly the Slovak people in times of heightened Magyarisation.

Confronted by advocates of a "Czechoslovakist" linguistics such as his fellow Slovaks Kollár and Šafárik, Štúr wished to enhance the unity of the nation and his linguistic nationalism was at the time the most efficient way to achieve this objective:

> [e]ach nation is most easily united by what is its own, what is nearest to it, for in that it senses itself, its spirit, its thought, and thus too the Slovak nation will be most quickly and most certainly united through its unique, national, ancestral language[28].

In fact, the Slovak novelist Vladimír Mináč seems strangely reminiscent of Štúr when he wrote in 1965, one century later:

> [the Slovak] national history is not the history of great historical movements, of military, social and political transformations; it is in the first place the history of the written word[29].

The Slovak language, because of its distinctiveness, has been "constitutive" of the Slovak identity and could be considered as legitimating the existence of a Slovak nation, separate from the Czech[30]. This is why Ladislav Holy suggests that if, at the end of the eighteenth century, Bernolák failed to impose the western Slovakian dialect as the Slovak literary language, it could be because it was too close to Czech dialects[31].

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[28]L.Štúr, quoted in LeCaine Agnew, "Czechs", p.32.

[29]Vladimír Mináč, "Tu žije národ", *Kulturny život*, 15, 22, 29 October 1965, quoted in Bernard Michel, *Nations and nationalismes en Europe centrale, XIX-XXe siècle* (Paris; Aubier; 1995), p.31 (see also Dušan Kovác, "Philosophie und Mythologisierung der slowakischen Geschichte", *Österreichische Osthefte*,vol.35, n°4, 1994, p.534)

[30]Hugh Seton-Watson (*Nations and States: An Enquiry into the Origins of Nations and the Politics of Nationalism*, London; Methuen; 1977) argues that "The creation of a Slovak nation in the nineteenth century is essentially the emergence of a language group into national consciousness. There is no more striking example than the Slovak case of the role of language in nation-forming"(p.169).

[31]Ladislav Holy, *The little Czech and the great Czech nation: National identity and the Post-communist social Transformation* (Cambridge; Cambridge University Press; 1996), p.94

The importance granted to language by Štúr and other Slovak awakeners in the nineteenth century should not come as a surprise: Miroslav Hroch points out the decisive impact of the assertion and the codification of a national language for the national movements in nineteenth century multinational empires like Habsburg Austria-Hungary or tsarist Russia[32]. Slovakia is no exception to the rule and, to a large extent, Štúr and the generation of Young Slovaks were following the example of Josef Dobrovský (1753-1829), Josef Jungmann (1773-1847)[33] and the first Czech awakeners, who strove to give Czech its respectability as a scholarly language. The linguistic separation between Czechs and Slovaks is in this respect just another illustration that, as Toynbee put it,

> [i]n Central and Eastern Europe, the growing consciousness of nationality had attached itself neither to traditional frontiers nor to new geographical associations but almost exclusively to mother tongues[34].

There was hence something ironic and politically dangerous, in the 1920 Language Law which recognised a completely fictious "Czechoslovak" language as the official languague of Czechoslovakia. As late as 1931, a new Slovak grammar, commissioned by the "Czechoslovak"-oriented (Slovak) minister of education Ivan Dérer, still advocated the adoption (alongside and separate from Czech) of the West Slovak dialect and its many Czechisms as the Slovak literary language, thus trying in vain to reverse, at least in part, the "schism" of the 1840s[35].

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[32]Miroslav Hroch, "Language and National identity", in Richard L.Rudolph and David F. Good (eds), *Nationalism and Empire: The Habsburg Empire and the Soviet Union* (New York; St-Martin's Press; 1992), p.65-76.

[33]The philologist Josef Jungmann was the most influential proponent of linguistic nationalism among the Czechs and is the author of a Czech-German dictionary, as well as of translations of Western works such as Chateaubriand's *Atala* and Milton's *Paradise Lost*.

[34]A.J Toynbee, *The World after the Peace Conference* (1926), p.18, quoted in Alfred Cobban, *The Nation state and National Self-determination* (London; Collins; 1969), p.69

[35]James Ramon Felak, *"At the Price of the Republic": Hlinka's Slovak People's Party, 1929-1938* (Pittsburgh and London; University of Pittsburgh Press; 1994), p.87 ; CA. Macartney, *Hungary and her successors: The treaty of Trianon and its consequences, 1919-1937* (London, New York, Toronto; Oxford University Press; 1937), p.127

The linguistic split marked to a large extent the end of the Czechoslovak idea as a concrete and practical reality and jeopardised the impact of "Czechoslovakism"[36]: perhaps more importantly, it established certain enduring conflictual elements in the Czech-Slovak relationship, such as the Czech stereotypes of Slovak "betrayal" and "separatism"[37], which will be examined in chapter 2.

A reassessment of the linguistic, and implicitly, ethnic proximity of the Czechs and Slovaks is thus needed. However the gist of the problem does not rest with these elements, since many "nations" exist self-consciously as the hybrid of two or more nations. The Czechs and Slovaks may be linguistically separated, but they still had a better claim to forge (or even merge into) a common identity than many other generally uncontested nations[38]. The more unambiguous fact is that the Czech lands and Slovakia had before 1918 strikingly different historical, cultural and economic backgrounds.

History could indeed hardly be invoked as a justification for the union of the Czechs and Slovaks. The Great Moravian Empire of the ninth century and the influence of the Hussite movement in Slovakia[39] were not significant enough to legitimate by themselves the creation of a common state.

In fact, after the collapse of the Great Moravian empire, the historical fates of the Czechs and the Slovaks had been only remotely linked. The Czechs achieved a high degree of autonomy and statehood, personified by the kingdom of Bohemia and the integrity of the lands of the Crown of Saint-Wenceslas, whereas the Slovaks began a long period of submission to Magyar domination, their history becoming a mere part of Hungarian history.

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[36]Brock, *The Slovak,* p.33

[37]See Kovác, "Czechs", p.368

[38]Discussed later in this chapter.

[39]Josef Korbel, *Twentieth century Czechoslovakia: The meanings of its history* (New York; Columbia University Press; 1977), p.91 ; RW Seton-Watson, *25 years of Czechoslovakia* (London; The New Europe Publishing Company; 1945), p.13 ; Roger Portal, *The Slavs* (London; Weidenfeld and Nicolson; 1965), p.239.

The defeat of the Czech Protestant estates at the Battle of the White Mountain in 1620 considerably limited the sovereignty of the "historic" Czech nation but even under the Habsburgs and especially after the *Ausgleich* of 1867, the Czechs lived under the relatively benevolent Austrian rule, whereas the Slovaks endured the deliberate policy of Magyarisation of the Hungarian authorities.

Czechs and Slovaks occasionally cooperated, most evidently in 1848 when Slovak leaders such as Štúr participated to the Slav Congress in Prague, but their divergent historical paths were to have profound implications on the relations between the two nations, especially in the context of the national revivals of the nineteenth century.

In the Czech Lands, the national movement was, especially from the 1890s, accompanied by the steady emergence of a dynamic civil society.

The Czech political landscape became increasingly pluralist. The traditional spokesman of Czech national interests, the Old Czech party, was successively challenged by the creation of the Young Czechs in 1874 and the Social democratic party in 1878. By the end of the century, six other parties had come into being: the Agrarians, the National Socialists, the Christian Socialists, the Radical Progressives, the State Rights Radicals, the People's (later Progressive) Party[40].

The Czechs gradually acquired all the symbolic attributes of a nation without a state: a National Museum (founded in 1818)[41], a National Theatre as well as an autonomous Czech university (following the division in 1882 of Prague university into a German and a Czech institutions). Their associative life took off with for instance the creation in 1862 of the patriotic gymnastic movement *Sokol* ("Hawks") on the model of the German *Turnverein*[42].

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[40]For a discussion of the emergence of pluri-partism in the Czech lands, see for instance Bruce M. Garver, *The Young Czech Party 1874-1901 and the emergence of a Multi-party System* (New Haven, London; Yale University Press; 1978) and "The Czechoslovak Tradition", pp.51-52

[41]Originally devoted to "Bohemian" (without "national" distinctions between Czech and German) traditions , it became in effect a "Czech" national Museum by 1831 (Bernard Michel, *Histoire de Prague*, Paris; Fayard; 1998, pp.216-217)

[42]Michel, *ibid.*, pp.257-258

Consequently, as vividly illustrated in the short stories of Jan Neruda and Rainer Maria Rilke, Bohemia was more and more Czech and less and less German[43]. This process of "Czechisation" of public life was nowhere more evident than in Prague, where the share of the German population dropped from more than 40 percent in 1855 to less than 7 percent in 1910, on the eve of the First World War[44].
Neruda thus pointedly remarked in 1874 that

> Prague, which was still celebrated fifty years ago because it was here that was spoken 'the most beautiful German in the world' and where, still twenty years ago, anyone who spoke Czech in public was still shyly whispering, is nowadays a resolutely Czech town. The intelligentsia has developed in an unhoped for manner and speaks a perfectly correct language, the middle classes have deeply evolved thanks to the associative and social life, to the journals and to theatre[45].

This dynamism of Czech political and cultural life was however in sharp contrast with the limited size of the Slovak intelligentsia, estimated by RW Seton-Watson and Jörg Höensch at no more than 750 to 1000 personalities[46], and of whom C.A. Macartney wrote:

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[43]Jan Neruda, *Prague Tales* (Budapest; Central European University Press; 1996; first publication 1878); Rainer Maria Rilke, *Zwei Prager Geschichten* (König Bohusch, Die Geschwister) (*Werke 3: Prosa und Dramen*; Frankfurt am Main, Leipzig; Insel Verlag; 1996, pp.149-241). See also a short story of 1902 by the French writer (and visitor) Guillaume Apollinaire, *Le Passant de Prague* [the Passer-by of Prague] where the narrator "to his amazement", cannot make himself understood in German when he asks his way in the Bohemian capital (Apollinaire, *Oeuvres en Prose Complète I*; Paris; Gallimard; 1977; p.83).

[44]Henry Bogdan, *Histoire des pays de l'Est: Des origines à nos jours* (Paris; Perrin; 1990 and 1991), p.174 ; Gary B.Cohen, *The Politics of Ethnic Survival: Germans in Prague, 1861-1914* (Princeton; Princeton University Press; 1981), p.10. A.J.P. Taylor (*The Habsburg Monarchy 1809-1918: A History of the Austrian Empire and Austria-Hungary*, London, Penguin Books, 1990, p.27) writes that in Prague "in 1815 there were 50,000 Germans and only 15,000 Czechs ; even in 1848 respectable people spoke only German in the streets, and to ask the way in Czech would provoke an offensive reply" [the contrast with Apollinaire's experience half a century later is indeed striking]. See also Alfredo Laudiero, *Api e cinghiali: Culture politiche dell'Europa Centrale, il caso ceco* (Soveria Mannelli; Rubbettino Editore; 2000), pp.39-42. Derek Sayer, "The Language of Nationality and the Nationality of Language: Prague 1780-1920", *Past and Present*, n°153, November 1993, p.176

[45]"Neco z pražské ceštiny" (1874), in Studie kratké a kratší, 1876, volume 1, p.128 (quoted in Bernard Michel, *La Mémoire de Prague: Conscience Nationale et Intelligentsia dans l'histoire tchèque et slovaque*, Paris; Librairie Académique Perrin, 1986, p.77)

[46]RW Seton-Watson, *The New Slovakia* (Prague; Borovy; 1924), p.14 ; Jörg K. Hoensch, "Die Verfassung der CSR und die slowakische Frage", in Karl Bosl (ed.), *Die demokratisch-parlamentarische Struktur der Ersten Tschechoslowakischen Republik* (Munich and Vienna; R.Oldenburg Verlag; 1975), p.86

> [t]he active Slovak nationalists, even when reinforced by the inevitable band of turn-coats, remained a mere handful, consisting only of a few hundreds of men, totally insufficient in numbers and sometimes in training or even capacity to undertake the complex task of ruling the country. The remainder of the intelligentsia, who might have given a lead to the masses, had become Magyarized both in language and mentality.[47]

In fact, some prominent figures of the Hungarian national movement such as Sandor Petöfi[48], Count Zay and perhaps even Lajos Kossuth himself[49], were Magyarised Slovaks (often called Magaryones)[50].

The Czechs had in Prague a "natural" historical, political, economic and cultural centre but the Slovaks were forced to concentrate their activities in small isolated towns such as Turčianský Svätý Martin (where the cultural institution *Matica slovenska* was established in 1863), Ružomberok, Liptovsky Svätý Mikulaš, Banská Bystrica or Trnava and this thwarted the establishment of a strong national movement[51].

Bratislava, the largest town in Slovakia, remained until after the War a predominantly German and Hungarian city, often better known under the name of Presburg (in German) or Pozsony (in Hungarian). In 1910, the Slovaks still accounted for less than 15 percent of its population (as opposed to 41 percent of Germans and 40 percent of Hungarians)[52].

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[47]Macartney, *Hungary*, p.111

[48]Petöfi was the son of a Southern Slav butcher-inkeeper and a Slovak mother (George Barany, "The Age of Royal Absolutism, 1790-1848", in Peter F.Sugar (ed.), *A History of Hungary*; London; Tauris; 1990; p.206)

[49]Taylor, *The Habsburg*, p.58. István Deák has however argued that Kossuth was not of Slovak origin (*The Lawful Revolution: Louis Kossuth and the Hungarians, 1848-1849*; New York and Guildford; Columbia University Press; 1979; pp.9-10)

[50]Macartney, *Hungary,* p.89 ; S. Kirschbaum, *Slovaques et Tchèques,* p.102

[51]Johnson, *Slovakia*, p.25

[52]*ibid.*, p.24. A positive evolution could however be detected by outsiders such as the French historian Ernest Denis who noted in 1917 that "the old German city which still counts 30 000 Germans out of its 50 000 inhabitants, is now an islet, lost in the middle of an overwhelmingly Slovak county. When I have visited it, already some years ago, I had, on the market, among the peasants of the neighbourhood, the very clear sensation of the Slav pressure which slowly drives the foreigner back and takes again possession of the territory

Similarly, while the Czech representation at the Austrian Diet was influential and benefited from the introduction of the universal suffrage in 1907, the Slovaks had to cope with an electoral system characterised by gerrymandering and discriminatory practices[53]. As a consequence, the Slovak delegation in the Budapest parliament between 1867 and 1918 was minimal: the most "successful" elections for the Slovak political parties were 1901 and 1907, when respectively four and seven Slovaks were elected (in 1910, the number of Slovak deputies fell again to only three out of the 58 representatives sent by Slovak constituencies to Budapest)[54].

Moreover, the contacts between the Czech lands and Slovakia remained limited and the involvement of Slovak intellectuals such as Kollár and Šafárik in the Czech national awakening of the nineteenth century[55] cannot be taken as illustrative of the reality of the situation: as Jan Hajda contended, "before 1918 educated Czechs had fewer acquaintances among Slovaks than among Germans, Poles, Yugoslavs or Frenchmen" and Czech people tended to confuse Slovakia and Slovenia (in Czech, *Slovensko* and *Slovinsko*)[56]. The Slovak population was largely rural and the small nationally-aware elite found it hard to publicise the Slovak question to the larger world, especially since any attempt to link the fate of the Slovaks to the fate of the Czechs was irremediably condemned by the Magyar regime as a pan-Slav "provocation".

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once imprudently abandoned" (Ernest Denis, *La Question d'Autriche: les Slovaques*, Paris; Librairie Delagrave; 1917; p. 88)

[53]An account of the methods of electoral fraud and gerrymanding techniques used by the Magyar regime in the Slovak regions is to be found in the book of R.W Seton-Watson (published under the pseudonym Scotus Viator) , *Racial problems in Hungary* (London; Archibald Constable; 1908).

[54]Korbel, *Twentieth,* pp.90-91 ; Jozef Lettrich, *A History of Slovakia* (New York; Frederick A.Praeger; 1955), pp.37-38. This contrasted with the situation of the Czechs who occupied 107 seats of 516 in the Austrian Reichsrat - 20.74 % of seats for 23.24 % of the population (Paul Vyšný, *Neo-Slavism and the Czechs*; Cambridge; Cambridge University Press; 1977; p.47).

[55]For more details, Robert B. Pynsent, *Questions of Identity: Czech and Slovak Ideas of Nationality and Personality* (Budapest, London, New York; Central European University Press; 1994).

[56]Carol Skalnik Leff, *National Conflict in Czechoslovakia: The Making and Remaking of a State, 1918-1987* (Princeton; Princeton University Press; 1988), pp.35-36. To be fair, the Slovak "self-identity" was itself rather confused, many Slovaks defining themselves as "Slav" rather than "Slovak" (Brock, *The Slovak*, p.3 and 16; Pynsent, *Questions*, p.60)

For all these reasons and as a consequence of the lack of democratic (pluralist) tradition in Slovakia as well of their sheer numerical superiority (in 1918, around 7 million Czechs against only 2 million Slovaks), the Czechs logically took the leading role in the newly-created Czechoslovakia. This predominance of Czech politicians and of the Czech way to do politics was initially recognised as desirable by the majority of Slovaks[57] and even Andrej Hlinka, who would later create the nationalist Slovak People's Party, stated in 1918 that Slovakia needed "one million Czechs" as administrators, teachers and technical experts[58]. Consequently, the new Czechoslovak administration was set up as a product of the former Austrian bureaucratic system, widely acknowledged to be more efficient than its Hungarian counterpart[59].

However, the differences between the two nations were not only political, but also cultural - and primarily religious.

Religious questions were the source of persistent tensions between Czechs and Slovaks[60]. While the Slovaks inclined towards a rather conservative Catholicism, the Czechs were nominally Catholic but traditionally deeply influenced by the legacy of the Hussite movement, which was considered by certain Czech "awakeners" like the great historian František Palacký (in his *History of the Czech nation in Bohemia and Moravia*) or Tomáš Masaryk as the defining event in Czech history. According to this school of historiography[61], the Catholic Counter-Reformation and the consolidation of Habsburg rule on the Czech lands which followed the White Mountain were perceived as a Period of Darkness (*období*

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[57]Seton-Watson, *The New*, p.8, 15

[58]Jörg K.Hoensch, "Tschechoslowakismus oder Autonomie- Die Auseinandersetzungen um die Eingliederung der Slowakei in die Tschechoslowakische Republik, in Hans Lemberg and Peter Heumos (eds), *Das Jahr 1919 in der Tschechoslowakei und in Ostmitteleuropa* (Munich, Vienna; R.Oldenbourg; 1993), p.140

[59]Helmut Slapnicka, "Der neue Staat und die bürokratische Kontinuität, die Entwicklung der Verwaltung 1918-1938", in Bosl , *Die demokratisch-parlamentarische Struktur,* pp.121-147

[60]See Seton-Watson, *The New*, pp.32-50

[61]The controversy about the meaning of Czech history is considered in chapter 2.

temna)[62] and the conflict between Protestantism (under its Hussite form) and Catholicism was placed at the core of Czech political and cultural development (with arguably the struggle against the Germans)[63].

Given the essential role of the Hussite legacy for the Czech national movement and the rather lukewarm attitude of the Czechs towards Catholicism and religion in general, Hlinka, a Catholic priest and the foremost advocate of Slovak autonomy, declared as early as 1908, that he was "not worried about the language, since each is almost the same as the other ; it is [Czech] atheism which could destroy us"[64].

The religious policies of the First Republic met with resistance in the more traditionalist Slovakia.

The destruction by a Czech mob of the column of the Virgin Mary on Prague's Old Town Square on 3 November 1918[65], the secularisation of education and the support given by the regime to the foundation of an autonomous Czechoslovak Church in the Hussite tradition did nothing to assuage Slovak fears of Czech anticlericalism[66] but the most significant polemic emerged after the commemoration on 6 July 1925 of the burning of Jan Hus at the stake. Following the participation of president Masaryk and other members of the cabinet to the ceremony, diplomatic relations between Czechoslovakia and the Vatican were broken off. A *modus vivendi* was later signed by the Foreign Minister Edvard Beneš on 2 February 1928, partly as the price to pay for the participation of the Slovak Populists to the governmental coalition between 1927 and 1929.

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[62]Mikuláš Teich, "Introduction", in Teich, *Bohemia,* p.16

[63]A useful summary of the issue can be found in Felak, *"At the Price"*, p.21-22

[64]quoted in Samo Fal'tan, *Slovenská otázka v Ceskoslovensku* (Bratislava; Vydavatel'stvo politickej literatúry; 1968), p.22

[65]Seton-Watson, *The New*, p.36; Michel, *Histoire*, p.314 ; Felak, "*At the Price*", p.22. The column was significantly replaced by a monument devoted to Jan Hus.

[66]See for example Jörg K.Hoensch, *Die Slowakei und Hitlers Ostpolitik: Hlinkas Slowakische Volkspartei zwischen Autonomie und Separation, 1938/1939* (Cologne, Graz; Böhlau Verlag; 1965), p.2

Masaryk's view that the separation of the Church from the State was the first and most important step towards the "de-Austrianization" of Czechoslovakia hence antagonised the Slovak (and overwhelmingly Catholic) part of the country[67].

Crucially, these religious differences between Czechs and Slovaks survived despite the atheist policies of the communist regime. In Slovakia, the role of religion as a manifestation of dissent was significant and some of the most eloquent displays of opposition to the communist regime were the pilgrimages[68], for instance the celebrations in 1985 of the eleven hundredth anniversary of the death of St-Methodius, Bishop of Slovakia:

> When the commemorative day of July 7 arrived, the difference between Czech and Slovak religiosity was once again demonstrated. Although Methodius had lived and worked in the traditional Czech lands and was buried in the Moravian town of Velehrad, some 100,000 to 250,000 Slovaks swarmed to Velehrad for the occasion, while only a few Czechs turned out. The commemoration of the death of a missionary to the Czechs had become a Slovak national religious event... The believers spontaneously chanted, "We want the pope ! We want freedom"- and this again suggested a link between the desire for religious freedom and the desire for political self-determination. *For the Slovaks it was perfectly natural that a religious event should assume a nationalist character...*[69]

The potential threat to the regime that Catholicism constituted in Slovakia was recognised by the communist authorities, which concentrated anti-religious policies in the region. An

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[67]Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, *The Making of a State: Memories and Observations, 1914-1918* (London; George Allen & Unwin; 1927), p.438.

[68]even if the Slovak Catholic church has sometimes been accused of complicity and compromise with the communist regime

[69]Pedro Ramet, "Christianity and National Heritage among the Czechs and Slovaks", in Pedro Ramet (ed.), *Religion and nationalism in Soviet and East European politics* (Durham and London; Duke University Press; 1989), pp.282-283 (emphasis added)

Institute for Scientific Atheism was established in Bratislava in 1971 and Slovak universities became endowed with Atheism Faculties[70].

However, official statistics of 1984 showed that, if the percentage of believers in Czechoslovakia was only 36 percent, this figure reached 51 percent in the case of Slovakia (30 percent in the Czech lands). As far ar the practice of religion is concerned, "in 1984, 71.6 percent of the children born in Slovakia were baptized, whereas in the Czech lands it was 31.2 percent. Church funerals stood at 80.5 percent in Slovakia and 50.6 percent in the Czech lands. Fifty-three percent of weddings were held in churches, though in Czech parts it was only 15.8 percent"[71].

The first census of the post-communist era, conducted in 1991, confirmed that only 9.8 percent of the Slovak population declared themselves "without confession", in stark contrast with Bohemia-Moravia, where 39.7 percent of the respondents were registered as non-believers[72].

The religious divergence between Czechs and Slovaks was also vindicated in the immediate aftermath of the Velvet Revolution, especially by the good initial electoral showing in 1990 of the Slovak Christian democrats which emerged as the main competitors of the "revolutionary" movement Public Against Violence in Slovakia.

Religious issues had also provoked a political rift among the Slovak elites during the First republic. The Slovak protestants, who constituted only approximately 16.8 percent of the Slovak people and 12 percent of Slovakia's population[73], exercised an important and disproportionate political influence. Being customarily more supportive of a "Czechoslovak" orientation than the Catholics, they tended to assimilate easily with Czech elites and, at the example of personalities like Milan Hodža or Ivan Dérer, consequently occupied some of the highest positions in the newly-founded state.

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[70] *ibid.*, p.279

[71] Milan J.Reban, "The Catholic Church in Czechoslovakia", in Pedro Ramet (ed.), *Catholicism and politics in communist societies* (Durham and London; Duke University Press; 1990), p.152

[72] Štefan Očovský, "Zur Religionsgeographie der Slowakei", *Österreichische Osthefte*, Jahrgang 36 / 1994, Heft 1, p.74

[73] Václav L. Beneš, "Czechoslovak Democracy and Its Problems, 1918-1920", in Mamatey and Luža, *A History*, p.57. See also Johnson, *Slovakia*, p.27.

On the whole, religious differences were an important element of differentiation between Czechs and Slovaks, because they became -at least during the First republic- one of the main channels of opposition to Prague's policies in Slovakia[74]. The staunchly Catholic Hlinka's Slovak People's Party (SPP), whose motto was "for God and the [Slovak] nation"[75], presented itself as the main defender of Slovak interests and the spokesman of the Slovak nation in front of the anticlerical and "godless" Czechs. The SPP gradually diversified its themes to include economic or more strictly political revendications but its consistent electoral record as the first party in Slovakia (table 1.1) would tend to demonstrate the impact that religion still had on Slovak political life.

Table 1.1 : Parliamentary elections interwar period (percentage of votes in Slovakia)

Party	1920	1925	1929	1935
Slovak People's Party	**17.6**	**34.3**	**28.4**	**30.1**
Social Democrats	38.0	4.2	9.5	11.4
National Socialists	2.2	2.6	3.1	3.2
Agrarian Party	18.0	17.4	19.5	17.6
Communist Party	-	13.9	10.7	13.0
Czechoslovak People's Party	-	1.3	2.5	2.3
National Democrats	-	1.8	3.8	1.6
Smalltraders' Party	-	0.8	2.1	2.6

Source: Johnson, *Slovakia*, pp.65-66

Not surprisingly therefore, the Slovak Nazi-puppet state established during the second World War (1939-1945) was based on a rather contradictory mix of fascist and clerical ideas, and

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[74]See for instance Hoensch, *Die Slowakei,*, pp.1-3

[75]*ibid.*, p.20

was headed by Jozef Tiso -Hlinka's successor as chairman of the SPP and, like him, a Catholic priest[76].

Finally, besides these profound historical and socio-cultural faultlines, the economic differences between Czechs and Slovaks were also important.

Before the creation of Czechoslovakia, the Czech Lands (Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia) were the richest and the most industrialised region of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy[77], and by 1880 were producing "75 percent of all lignite in Austria, 94 percent of anthracite output, 84 percent of cast iron output, 70 percent of chemical output, 54 percent of output in machine building, and 94 percent of refined sugar ouput. In other sectors, the share of the Bohemian regions in the fast growing sectors rose sharply between 1880 and 1910 - the share in iron ore output grew from 11 to 33 percent and the share of pig iron production grew from 37 to 58 percent"[78].

Depending on the estimates, the Czech lands acccounted for between 60 and 80 percent of the total Austro-Hungarian industrial production[79] - while including on its territory only 20.22 percent of the Austro-Hungarian population[80].

In contrast, Slovakia, while being one of the wealthiest areas of Hungary and accounting for between 17 and 20 percent of all Hungarian industries[81], was lagging considerably behind,

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[76]Yeshayahu Jelinek for instance called the Slovak state the "parish republic" (*The Parish Republic: Hlinka's Slovak People's Party - 1939-1945*; Boulder, East European Quarterly; New York, Columbia University Press; 1976).

[77]David F. Good, *The Economic Rise of the Habsburg Empire, 1750-1914* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London; University of California Press; 1984), p.129-135; Bruce Garver, "The Czechoslovak Tradition", p.43

[78]Good, *The Economic*, p.132

[79]Victor Mamatey estimates that about 80 percent of the empire's industrial production was concentrated in the Czech lands, but a somewhat more realistic assessment would appear to put the figure at no more than 70 percent (Petr Pavlínek, "Regional Development and the Disintegration of Czechoslovakia", *Geoforum*, vol.26, n°4, 1995, p.369 ; Victor S.Mamatey, "The Birth of Czechoslovakia: Union of Two Peoples", in Brisch and Volgyes, *Czechoslovakia*, p.76 ; Frank Hadler, "Böhmen und Mähren im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert, in Joachim Bahlcke, Winfried Eberhard and Miloslav Polívka (eds), *Böhmen und Mähren (Handbuch der historischen Stätten)*, Stuttgart; Alfred Kröner Verlag; 1998; p.CXXIII).

[80]calculation based on the figures of the recensement of 1910 given in Bogdan, *Histoire*, p.178

[81]V.Beneš, "Czechoslovak", p.48 ;Alice Teichova, *The Czechoslovak Economy: 1918-1980* (London; Routledge; 1988), p.35 ; Macartney, *Hungary*, pp.82-83; David W. Paul, "Slovak Nationalism and the

still a predominantly rural society. As demonstrated by table 1.2, the western part of Czechoslovakia (Bohemia and Moravia) had less than one third of its population working in agriculture, but, with only slightly less than two-third of its population employed in this sector, Slovakia was still a predominantly rural society.

Table 1.2

Regions	Year	Number of inhabitants	Percentage of the population employed in agriculture
Bohemia	1910 1921 1930	6,769,237 6,670,610 7,109,376	32.28 29.69 24.06
Moravia	1910 1921 1930	3,379,173 3,338,977 3,565,010	38.57 35.27 28.56
Slovakia	1910 1921 1930	2,925,251 2,998,244 3,329,793	62.57 60.63 56.82
Subcarpathian Ruthenia	1910 1921 1930	595,598 604,593 725,357	71.29 67.63 66.29
Czechoslovakia	1910 1921 1930	14,669,259 13,612,424 14,729,536	42.01 39.56 34.64

Source: Statistická ročenka republiky Československé, Praha 1938, p.15 (quoted in Jiří Kosta, "Die sozioökonomische Entwicklung der CSR-Wirstchaftliche und soziale Probleme", in Bosl, *Die demokratisch-parlamentarische*, p.26).

The new Czechoslovak state was thus created with a west-east developmental gradient between the industrialised Czech lands, rural Slovakia and backward Subcarpathian Ruthenia

Hungarian State, 1870-1910", in Paul Brass (ed.), *Ethnic Groups and the State* (London and Sydney; Croom Helm; 1985), p.121.

(Carpatho-Ukraine)[82] and in 1918, Slovakia accounted for only 8.5 percent of the new state's industrial production[83].

The establishment of Czechoslovakia had as an immediate and somewhat paradoxical consequence the deindustrialisation of Slovakia. Slovak firms could not survive the competition with their more performant and efficient Czech rivals and, "from 1918 to 1923 over 200 plants in Slovakia were shut down"[84].

As C.A Macartney gloomingly stated,

> the Slovak industry had to face the competition of the great and old-established Bohemian and Silesian concerns. The richer firms bought up, or obtained control through holding-banks (notably the Živnostenská Banka) over, the greater part of the Slovak establishments. The latter were thus left at the mercy of the owners in the Historic Lands, who worked them or closed them down as they pleased. Probably nearly one-third of all the Slovak industries disappeared in this way during the immediate post-War period, the heavy industries and textile factories being chiefly affected[85].

For instance, the Slovak iron industry, relatively competitive within the Empire before 1918, produced 10 percent of Czechoslovak iron in 1919, but this share quickly dropped to a mere 2.7 percent in 1926[86]. This situation was also reproduced in the agricultural sector, the traditional lifeline of Slovak economy[87].

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[82] A.Teichova, *The Czechoslovak,* p.9 ; D.F. Good, *The Economic*, p.12 ; this economic differential is actually reflected in literacy rates (see table 1.6)

[83] Pavlínek, "Regional ", p.352

[84] Mamatey, "The development', p.116

[85] Macartney, *Hungary,* p.130

[86] Teichova, *The Czechoslovak*, p.35

[87] Teichova, *ibid.*, pp.24-26 ; Pavlínek, "Regional", p.369 ; Ladislav K. Feierabend, "Agriculture in the First Republic of Czechoslovakia", in Miloslav Rechcigl, *Czechoslovakia Past and Present, volume 1: Political, International, Social, and Economic Aspects* (The Hague, Paris; Mouton; 1968), p.178

Furthermore, the disruption of the economic contacts and trade between the successor states of Austria-Hungary had, given the traditional links between Slovakia and Hungary, a direct and negative impact on Slovakia. Czechoslovak trade with Hungary continuously decreased during the First Republic, from 6.1 % in 1924 to 5.6 % in 1929, and reached even lower levels as a consequence of the protectionist measures taken after the economic crisis (2.1 % in 1932 and 1.7 % in 1937)[88]. Slovakia lost the competitive advantage formerly provided by its geographical proximity to Budapest and this put for example an abrupt end to the seasonal migrations of Slovak peasants or workers to Hungary[89].

On top of this, the economic crisis hit Czechoslovakia and provoked further tensions between Czechs and Slovaks -even if most scholars now argue that the more industrialised (and export-oriented) Czech lands suffered more losses than Slovakia[90].

The First Republic lacked a clear development and redistributive policy in direction of the eastern provinces of the country (Slovakia and Ruthenia) and it is only in 1935 that Milan Hodža, the first (and only) Slovak prime minister of interwar Czechoslovakia, launched the idea of an investment programme to foster the equalisation of living standards between the Czech lands and Slovakia[91].

This apparent lack of concern was nevertheless not the manifestation of a deliberate discrimination but the result of the unconditional belief of Czech politicians in the virtue of free market (it will be later argued[92] that this was also probably the case after 1989). One could also add, in defence of the policy-makers of the First Republic, that economic theory has only recently started to address the issue of regional underdevelopment[93], which was hardly a matter of discussion before World War II.

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[88]figures in Jiří Kosta, "Die sozioökonomische Entwicklung der CSR-Wirstchaftliche und soziale Probleme", in Bosl, *Die demokratisch-parlamentarische*, p.18

[89]Hugh Seton Watson, *Eastern Europe*, p.178

[90]Felak, *"At the Price"*, p.106

[91]Hoensch, *Die Slowakei*, p.29

[92]See chapter 3

[93]Zora P. Pryor, "Czechoslovak Economic Development in the Interwar Period", in Mamatey and Luža, *A History*, p.214.

Most significantly, the economic perspectives of the Czechs and Slovaks were strikingly divergent. Whereas Bohemia-Moravia constituted an industrialised, individualist society with a widely developed social stratification and an influential middle class, Slovakia was still characterised by its agrarian and collectivist outlook. The interaction between these two dissimilar societies was consequently marked by misunderstandings and mutual incomprehension: economics is (largely) a matter of management rather than a fundamental feature of social relations, but the economic disparities between Czechs and Slovaks were in any case likely to make their coexistence difficult.

Having thus considered the political, socio-cultural and economic differences between the Czech lands and Slovakia at the time of the foundation of the Czechoslovak state in 1918, there are grounds to believe that the country was from the start impossible to govern, if only because of the difficulty to create a "Czechoslovak" national identity.
The notion of "Czechoslovakism" -the belief in the existence of a single "Czechoslovak" nation divided into a Czech and a Slovak branches- was a determinant factor in the legitimisation of the state creation, yet the "dualism"[94] or "asynchronism"[95] between the Czech and Slovak nations has never been bridged during their nearly 74 years (interrupted for six years during the Second world war) of coexistence in a common state. The previous discussion indeed makes a strong case that Czechoslovakia could never have worked and was an artificial construction.

The two following sections -on the pragmatic reasons at the roots of the creation of the state in 1918 and the failure of the idea of "Czechoslovakism"- will momentarily reinforce this view, before proceeding to refute these claims and demonstrate why Czechoslovakia was viable and could have been saved after 1989.

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[94]Wehrlé, *Le Divorce*, p.71

[95]Zora Bútorová and Martin Bútora, "Die unerträgliche Leichtigkeit der Trennung", in Kipke and Vodicka, *Abschied*, p.112

The formation of Czechoslovakia for pragmatic considerations

Given the "developmental" differential between the two regions, it would appear legitimate to conclude that the Czechs and the Slovaks were united in 1918 for pragmatic reasons. For Masaryk and the Czech politicians, the 2 million Slovaks constituted a counterweight to the German (3 millions) and, to a lesser extent, Hungarian (650,000 according to the 1921 census[96]) minorities -ensuring, with the 7 million Czechs a Slav majority in the newly-created state[97].

However, the Slovaks were also following pragmatic aims: the partnership with the Czechs was deemed to be the safest protection against Hungarian influence, and later revisionism, especially given the traumatic experience of Magyarisation. As Hlinka wrote on 9 November 1918 in an article of *Slovenský Denník*, "the Slovaks can find protection and security against age-old abuses by Hungarians only in the Czechoslovak state"[98].

The formation of Czechoslovakia was largely based on mutual interests: for the Czechs, it was the best way to solve the problem of German nationalism and it provided the Slovaks with the means to escape Hungarian domination[99]. The British historian R.W. Seton-Watson, hardly an opponent of the formation of Czechoslovakia[100], acknowledged the importance of pragmatism in the creation of the new state, when he remarked that

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[96]Ludvík Nemec, "Solution of the minorities problem" in Mamatey and Luža, *A history*, p.422

[97]Felak, *"At the Price"*, p.18

[98]Pavel Blaho, "Personal Recollection of a Few Episodes in Czecho-Slovak Relations", in Rechcigl *Czechoslovakia*, p.101

[99]Ľubomír Lipták, "Der 'Krach' der tschechoslowakischen Staatsidee", in Jörg K. Hoensch und Dušan Kovác (eds), *Das Scheitern der Verständigung: Tschechen, Deutsche und Slowaken in der Ersten Republik (1918-1938)* (Düsseldorf; Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für Kultur und Geschichte der Deutschen im östlichen Europa; 1994), p.43

[100]as his life and works prove it. See his *Masaryk in England* (Cambridge; Cambridge University Press; 1943); the two-volume publication *R.W Seton Watson and His Relations with the Czechs and Slovaks: Documents, Dokumenty, 1906-1951* (Prague; Ústav TG Masaryka; 1995-96) and Hugh and Christopher Seton-Watson, *The Making of a New Europe: R.W. Seton-Watson and the last Years of Austria-Hungary* (London; Methuen; 1981).

> the closest co-operation between Slovak and Czech was no mere luxury, but a compelling necessity, if the Czechs and Slovaks, occupying dangerous salients on the racial map of Europe, were to avoid utter destruction[101].

As a consequence, the Czechoslovak state was based on a confusion between the notions of "historic" and "natural" rights. If the historic rights of the Crown of Bohemia-Moravia had been upheld, Slovakia would not have been included in the new state and Hungary had arguably a legitimate claim to maintain its rule on a region which had been part of the kingdom of Saint-Stephen for about 1000 years and was commonly called Upper-Hungary (or *Felvidék*, "the Hills"[102]). On the other hand, the principle of natural rights could have justified the inclusion of Slovakia in the new state, which should however have then renounced to the German minority of Bohemia[103]. In fact, as Igor Lukes pointed out, when Slovakia was under discussion at the Versailles conference, Edvard Beneš, the foreign minister of the new state "argued somewhat inconsistently that borders ought to be marked in such a manner that the carved-out territory would form a viable economic unit...Thus, Czechoslovakia's borders in the West were drawn in accordance with the historical principle, while in the Slovak east the diplomats at Versailles applied the more pragmatic, economic principle of demarcation"[104].

This contradiction was later conceded by Masaryk himself when he declared that "it was Slovakia that mattered to me; and yet, according to the historic right, we should have relinquished Slovakia to the Hungarians"[105].

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[101]RW.Seton-Watson, *25 years*, p.14.

[102]Johnson, *Slovakia*, pp.16-17

[103]This argument is made by Fejtö, *Requiem*, p.433-434.

[104]Igor Lukes, *Czechoslovakia Between Stalin and Hitler: The Diplomacy of Eduard Beneš in the 1930s* (New York, Oxford; Oxford University Press; 1996), p.5.

[105]Karel Čapek, *Entretiens avec Masaryk* (La Tour d'Aigues; Editions de l'Aube; 1991), p.160

Even more explicitly, in his memoirs of the first World War, Masaryk (the son of a Slovak peasant from a region then called Slovacko, at the crossroads between Moravia and Slovakia[106]) states his *personal* reasons for the integration of Slovakia in the new state:

> My programme was a synthesis of Czech aspirations in the light of our constitutional, historical and natural rights; and I had kept the inclusion of Slovakia constantly in view, for I am by descent a Slovak, born in Moravia. Hungarian Slovakia I knew, as I had often been there, and I had a border line between Slovakia and the Magyar country clearly in mind[107].

Under this light, the union of the Czechs and the Slovaks was the result of the aspirations and activities of a handful of politicians, often in exile and hardly aware of the desires of the populations. The creation of Czechoslovakia was not brought about by a popular uprising or movement but was the successful outcome of the effective propaganda of the "Triumvirate" composed of the Czechs Tomáš Masaryk, Edvard Beneš and the Slovak Milan Štefánik[108]. The active lobbying of the Slovak immigration in the United States was also a decisive influence. Masaryk travelled extensively around the United States and successfully rallied the numerous Czech and Slovak American communities to the idea of a Czechoslovak state[109]. The Cleveland Agreement (October 1915) and the Pittsburgh Declaration (May 1918, in presence of Masaryk, who signed it) between the Bohemian National Alliance and the Slovak League of America constituted decisive steps towards the realisation of the Czechoslovak

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[106]Gordon Skilling, *T.G. Masaryk*, p.64-65: "it is not easy to identify Masaryk's real national origin or even his national consciousness. Although in his earlier years he sometimes called himself a Czech or a Moravian, in later life he claimed that he was Czech and Slovak, or "half-Slovak" or, sometimes, that he was of pure Slovak origin". See also Thomas D. Marzik, "Masaryk's National Background", in Peter Brock and H.Gordon Skilling (eds), *The Czech Renascence of the Nineteenth Century* (Toronto and Buffalo; University of Toronto Press; 1970), pp.239-253.

[107]Masaryk, *The making*, p.41

[108]Hoensch, "Tschechoslowakismus", p.136

[109]Josef Kalvoda, *The Genesis of Czechoslovakia* (Boulder, East European Monographs; New York; Columbia University Press; 1986), esp. pp.271-303.

ideal, chiefly because the American citizens of Czech and Slovak descent were increasingly oblivious of the distinction between their national origins[110].

The fact that Czechoslovakia was "made" through elite bargaining and diplomatic interventions would tend to emphasize the "weakness" of the new state and one of the many ironies of the existence of the common Czecho-slovak state was that, born in 1918 without referendum, or generally speaking without genuine and widespread popular legitimacy, it was also destroyed from above in 1992[111].

The "geopolitical argument"

There exists nevertheless an alternative, and more cynical, way to look at the creation of Czechoslovakia: Czechoslovakia was founded after the First World War because it served the interests of the victorious Western powers of the Entente - France, the United Kingdom and the United States. The new state could in their eyes act as a useful buffer state between Germany and the new Bolshevik-led Soviet Union.

Czechoslovakia remained until Munich the most important element in the French system of alliances in the region, and the president of the United States, Woodrow Wilson, became one of the most popular personalities of the country - Prague's train station even taking his name[112].

This leads to consider the broader argument according to which the union of the Czechs and the Slovaks was a consequence of the geopolitical situation of two small nations in need of a

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[110]Robert A. Kann, *The Multinational Empire: Nationalism and National Reform in the Habsburg Monarchy, 1848-1918, volume 1 (Empire and Nationalities)* (New York; Octagon Books; 1964), p.282. The Cleveland Agreement and the Pittsburgh Declaration aimed to promote the union of the Czechs and the Slovaks in a common state on the basis of an administrative and cultural autonomy for Slovakia. The Declaration was however later dismissed by Masaryk as "a local understanding between American Czechs and Slovaks upon the policy they were prepared to advocate" (Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, *The Making of a State: Memories and Observations, 1914-1918*; London; George Allen & Unwin; 1927; p.220)

[111]See chapter 6. The organisation of a referendum in 1918 would however have been unlikely (and would not necessarily have brought legitimacy to the new state).

[112]Victor S.Mamatey, "The Role of President Wilson in the Foundation of Czechoslovakia", in Rechcigl, *Czechoslovakia,* p.19 ; Herbert Adolphus Miller, "What Woodrow Wilson and America meant to Czechoslovakia", in Robert J. Kerner (ed.), *Czechoslovakia: Twenty Years of Independence* (Berkeley, Los Angeles; University of California Press; 1940), pp.71-87 ; David Kelly, "Woodrow Wilson and the Creation of Czechoslovakia", *East European Quarterly*, XXVI, n°2, June 1992, pp.185-207

"partner" to survive in a Central Europe, at the crossroads between the German "Drang Nach Osten" and Russian (for most of the twentieth century, Soviet) expansionism[113].

The domestic politics of Czechoslovakia has been largely influenced and conditioned by the nature of the international environment.

As a consequence, for the proponents of the inevitability of the dissolution of Czechoslovakia, the union between Czechs and Slovaks was due to be contested as soon as the external constraints would become less important and the international environment more favourable. These conditions seemed to be present after 1989, probably for the first time in this century because of "the retreat of Russia, the self-absorption of Germany , [and] the disintegration of the Soviet empire"[114]: without these exogenous forces, the "partnership" between the Czechs and the Slovaks could not be sustained, and the break-up of 1992 should in fact be taken as the definitive illustration of the relevance of what could be called the "geopolitical argument". Created by the great powers in 1918, Czechoslovakia disappeared as soon as these great powers lost interest in its fate. Each shift in the international system affected the ethnopolitics of the country, inducing the first break-up of 1938/39, as well as the definitive end of the state after the end of the Cold War.

The fourth chapter of this dissertation will come back to this approach and seek to refute it, arguing that, unlike in the 1930s, the international environment did not pre-determine the dissolution of Czechoslovakia in 1992.

The failure of the "Czechoslovakism" of the First Republic and of the Marxist conceptions of the communist regime

What should however for the moment be considered more relevant to our study, is the fact that the successive attempts to bring together the Czechs and the Slovaks all failed.

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[113]The Czechs and Slovaks were however traditionally well disposed towards Russia, as we shall see in chapter 4.

[114]Rupnik, "The international context", p.272

This could at first sight be taken by the proponents of the inevitability of the dissolution of Czechoslovakia, as a further confirmation of their theory, since they consider the union of the two nations as a mere "marriage of convenience": according to them, all attempts to "integrate" the Czech and the Slovak nations were destined to fail anyway.

The centralist constitution of 1920 questionably recognised the principle of a "Czechoslovak nation"[115] and, while it granted a specific status and extensive minority rights to the 3 million Sudeten Germans, the 2.5 million Slovaks, as a part of the "state-forming nation" (*státotvorný národ*), did not have any specific collective rights. As Jacques Rupnik indicated,

> the core of the Slovak problem [was] that, in the mind of the founders of the State, the Slovak nation constituted with the Czech nation the backbone of the State, whereas its real political situation put it instead on the side of the national minorities[116].

Masaryk stressed as the solution to this situation the role of education as a factor capable of ensuring the cohesion of the state. The differences between the Czechs and the Slovaks were to disappear naturally "as soon as a generation has grown up which has been educated in the same schools and lived in the same state"[117]. This policy met with some success since Slovakia experienced a real cultural development during the interwar period, but the imbalance between this significant improvement of cultural and educational perspectives and the corresponding lack of economic opportunities (partly a consequence of the worldwide economic depression after 1929) unintentionally contributed to the formation of a distinct Slovak consciousness. The newly-educated generation of Slovaks was hence not "Czechoslovak" but on the contrary increasingly aware of the specificity of the Slovak nation. C.A Macartney estimated in 1937 that about two-thirds of the younger generation of Slovaks

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[115]The Preamble of the constitution started by "We, the Czechoslovak nation". See for instance Victor Knapp, "Development of the Czechoslovak State from Its Origin to Its Extinction", in Knapp and Bartole, *La Dissoluzione,* p.7

[116]Jacques Rupnik, *Histoire du Parti communiste tchécoslovaque: Des Origines à la Prise du Pouvoir* (Paris; Presses de la Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques; 1981), p.129. We consider later whether this was a unconscious or deliberate tactic of the Czech leaders.

[117]*Czechoslovakia*, Prague, 1924, p.28, quoted in Eugen Steiner, *The Slovak dilemma* (Cambridge; Cambridge University Press; 1973), p.22

had become "autonomist" (believing in the individuality of the Slovak nation and advocating some measure of political autonomy from Prague), as opposed to one-third of "centralists" who still adhered to Czechoslovakism (and to the unitary state)[118].

This generational gap in Slovakia was actually reflected in the composition of the leadership of Slovak-based political parties. The young generation of Ľudáks (the name traditionally given to the members of the Slovak People's Party) was more and more "autonomist" and constituted an important proportion of the radical faction of the SPP, who eventually negotiated with Hitler the creation of the Nazi-sponsored Slovak state in 1939[119].
Even among the "internationalist" communists, young Slovak communists such as Gustáv Husák or Vlado Clementis increasingly expressed specifically Slovak "national" interests[120].

What is more, the following attempt by the communist regime after 1948 -probably as a recognition of the "mistakes" of the interwar period- to emphasise the process of economic equalisation as the definitive solution to the national issue equally failed. The starting point of the communist approach was the Marxist doctrine which stated that nationalism was just an expression of class conflicts and could therefore be overcome by economic equalisation:

> nationalism was a bourgeois phenomenon resulting not only from the unequal economic development of two societies but above all from the exploitation of one by the other. With the industrialization of Slovakia, the regime had hoped to put an end to Slovak national demands in Czechoslovakia, which in themselves were vestiges of its bourgeois past, and to allow for the joint socialist development of two societies where national differences would manifest themselves and be protected only on the

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[118]Macartney, *Hungary*, p.146. To be fair, this phenomenon seems in fact characteristic of what has been later defined as the "diploma disease" (and has recently been for example applied to the case of the Kosovo Albanians in the 1970s and 1980s). (See Robert Bideleux and Ian Jeffries, *A History of Eastern Europe: Crisis and Change*; London and New York; Routledge; 1998, p.432 and 300; Miranda Vickers, *Between Serb and Albanian: a History of Kosovo*; New York, Columbia University Press; 1998); Aleksandar Pavkovic, *The Fragmentation of Yugoslavia: Nationalism in a Multinational State* (New York; St-Martin's Press; 1997), p.80.

[119]Felak, *"At the Price"*, p.83; Hoensch, *Die Slowakei*, p.33.

[120]Yeshayahu A. Jelinek, *The Lust for Power: Nationalism, Slovakia, and the Communists, 1918-1948* (Boulder, East European Monographs; Columbia University Press; 1983).

cultural level. Political solutions like autonomy and federation would eventually disappear in an integrated socialist which itself would lead to the withering away of the state.[121]

But this policy had, like the "educational" policy of the First Republic, reverse consequences: "development, rather than creating a broad 'national [i.e, Czechoslovak] political society' has given Slovakia resources to build its own society"[122] and communist leaders proved as unable as their "bourgeois" predecessors to bring together the Czech and the Slovak nations[123]. The national policy of the Czechoslovak communists under Klement Gottwald and Antonín Novotný has been described as "neo-Czechoslovakist"[124] and the asymmetrical model in force between 1945 and 1969 appeared to many Slovaks as a proof that Slovakia might belong to the Slovaks but Czechoslovakia still belonged to the Czechs[125]. The notion of centralism was deeply enshrined in the constitution adopted in 1960, which defined the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic as "a *unitary* state of two fraternal nations"[126].

Therefore, the "Czechoslovakism" of the First Republic and the communist regime failed because they were both perceived by most Slovaks as a disguised attempt of "Czechisation" - and not of "Czechoslovakisation"- of the Slovak nation:

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[121]Stanislav J. Kirschbaum, "Federalism in Slovak communist politics", *Canadian Slavonic Papers*, vol. 19 n°4, 197, p. 457.

[122]Leff, *National conflict*, p.290

[123]See chapter 7 for a detailed discussion of this concept and of the Marxist-Leninist approach to the national question.

[124]the expression is used by Kirschbaum, *A history*, p.245

[125]Petr Pithart, *Osmašedesátý*, quoted by Holy, *The little Czech,* p.101

[126]Constitution of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, July 11, 1960 (chapter one, article 1, §2), in Jan F. Triska (ed.), *Constitutions of the Communist Party-States* (Stanford University; The Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace; 1968), p.432 (emphasis added).

> although the more sensitive Czech political elites proclaimed that Czechs and Slovaks would merge to become a new 'Czechoslovak' nation, the general consensus among Czech political elites was that the Slovaks were a lesser part of the Czech nation[127].

This is reflected in the declarations of the Czech "founders" of the Czechoslovak state. Masaryk explicitly stated in 1915 that "Slovaks are Czechs in spite of using their dialect as a literary language"[128] and Beneš, as late as December 1943, declared that

> the Slovaks are Czechs and the Slovak language is only one of the dialects of the Czech language-for example, that spoken in Haná [a town in Central Moravia]. I cannot stop anybody from calling himself a Slovak, but I shall not agree with a declaration that a Slovak nation exists.[129]

This refusal to acknowledge the existence of a Slovak nation sharply contrasts with the conception of the third member of the "Triumvirate" , the "Czechoslovak Slovak" Štefánik, for whom every Slovak was a Czech living in Slovakia, and every Czech was a Slovak living in the Czech Lands. Štefánik's notion of Czechoslovakism seemed to have been "bilateral"[130], implying the equality of the Czechs and the Slovaks and a notion of reciprocity, whereas for most Czechs, it was a purely unilateral process, with the Slovaks considered as nothing more than "Czechs to be developed". This dichotomy could also be found in the linguistic issue examined earlier: the ideal of the "Czechoslovakists" Šafárik and Kollár was a language that would be both "a Slovak Czech and a Czech Slovak (*chcme slovenskou češtinu a českou slovenštinu*)" and Kollár wondered why the Czechs could not

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[127]Robert J.Kaiser, "Czechoslovakia: the disintegration of a binational state" in Graham Smith (ed.), *Federalism: the multiethnic challenge* (London and New York; Longman; 1996), p.213.

[128]See the memorandum "Independent Bohemia" (1915) , reproduced in RW Seton-Watson, *Masaryk*, p.125

[129]quoted by Steiner,*The Slovak*, p.53

[130]Štefánik's premature (and controversial) death in a plane crash in 1919 during his return to Czechoslovakia prevents us to draw any definite conclusions about what his reactions to the policies of the state could have been.

"give way at least a little bit to the Slovaks... when the Slovaks have been willing to sacrifice everything to the Czechs with respect to the [literary] language"[131].

The creation of Czechoslovakia in 1918 was thus based on an evident absence of consensus between the Czechs and the Slovaks as far as the future of the state was concerned. "Czechoslovakism" provoked durable misunderstandings, and it is only with the federalisation of 1968-69 and the nomination of the Slovak Gustáv Husák as general secretary of the Czechoslovak Communist Party that references to a "Czechoslovak" identity almost completely disappeared[132].

Hence, after the failures of the First Republic and of the communist regime, the gap between the Czech and the Slovak societies was far from reduced. Czech feelings of having been betrayed by the Slovaks, in 1939 at the time of the founding of the Slovak state or in 1968 when the federalisation law was adopted in the aftermath of the invasion of the country, were paralleled by similar Slovak feelings, concerning the promises of autonomy unkept by the Czechs (the Pittsburgh agreements of 1918 or the Košice Programme of 1945)[133].

The break-up of Czechoslovakia: a "historically necessary" process ?

As a result, when the democratisation of 1989 came, the Slovaks had developed a sense of their national distinctiveness stronger than ever before. This is to be contrasted with their

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[131] quoted in Brock, *The Slovak*, p.23

[132] although after his dismissal and replacement at the head of the Party by the Czech Miloš Jakeš in December 1987, some manifestations of what the Slovak intellectual Milan Hübl called "neo-Novotnism" reemerged (Wehrlé, *Le divorce*, p.212 and 223)

[133] See more on this in ch.2. The Košice programme, the government programme adopted by the Czech and Slovak elites, formally recognised the equality of the Czech and Slovak nations, established a Slovak National Council and confirmed the autonomous status of the Slovak Communist Party. Yet the subsequent Prague agreements effectively reduced to nothing the influence of Slovak authorities on Czechoslovak politics.

situation before 1918, about which Robert Seton-Watson was able to write that "there can be little doubt that in another generation...assimilation would have been complete"[134].
Slovak independence in 1993, according to a somewhat optimistic view, was therefore logical, what Jiří Musil describes as "the ultimate fulfilment of Slovak national emancipation, a belated formation of a nation-state which for many internal and external reasons could not have been established earlier"[135]. The emancipation of the Slovaks appears to have been a gradual process, marked by several significant stages: 1918 and the end of Hungarian domination, 1939 and the creation of the Slovak state, 1945 and the "asymetrical" model granting them a formal autonomy, 1968 and the federalisation of the state and finally 1 January 1993[136].

However, provided we accept this interpretation, the split of 1992 could and should probably also be considered as an achievement for the Czechs, the realisation of a "Czech statehood" liberated from the shams and pretences of the notion of "Czechoslovak statehood" and the establishment of a homogeneous nation-state based on the historic rights of Bohemia-Moravia.

Yet the argument that the break-up was inevitable is founded on two contestable assumptions. First of all, it assumes that Czech and Slovak political cultures are not only different, but also in fact so contradictory and irreconcilable as to preclude the further coexistence of the two nations in a common state -an argument which will be refuted in chapter 2.
Before that, and for the moment, the next section concentrates on the second factor often invoked as an explanation for the dissolution of Czechoslovakia: the idea that the search of the Slovaks and the Czechs for their national identity *had* to end with the establishment of two separate independent states.

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[134]RW Seton-Watson, *25 years*, p.14 ; Mamatey, "The Birth", p.79

[135]Jiří Musil, "Introduction", in Musil, *The End*, p.10

[136]As early as 1981, Krejčí and Velimsky similarly called this process a "catching-up by stages" and distinguished at the time four stages, each of which brought the Slovaks some progress vis-à-vis the Czechs : 1918-1938, 1939-1945, 1948-1968, and a last stage starting from 1968 (Jaroslav Krejčí and Vizslav Velimsky, *Ethnic and political nations in Europe*; London; Croom Helm; 1981; p.150-151)

The "historical argument"

The argument about the supposed "historical necessity" of the break-up was used by Slovak separatists, who emphasised the ineluctability of the creation of a Slovak nation-state.
It was subsequently adhered to by Václav Havel himself, who first wrote in 1991 that "the Slovak will to emancipation is an integral part of the present historical moment"[137]. Even more explicitly, after his resignation from the Czechoslovak presidency in July 1992, he stated that he did not think "a single person could have stopped what is *historically necessary*"[138].

This section however contends that national statehood was perhaps not a historical necessity in the case of Slovakia and that the maintenance of a common state between Czechs and Slovaks was possible. Slovak and Czech secessionist claims were mostly based on the ambiguous notion of the right of national self-determination.

The trouble with national self-determination is not that it would tend to lead to a system of *Kleinstaaterei*, and the idea that the division of Czechoslovakia is dangerous because it created two fragile small states misses the point, and for at least three reasons.

First of all, and to put it in a simplistic way, "micro-states" like Andorra, Liechtenstein or San Marino have been recognised by the international community and there appears to be no reason for denying the rights of the Czechs and the Slovaks to create their own nation-states[139]. In post Cold-War Europe and with the advent of globalisation, virtually every

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[137]Václav Havel, *Summer meditations on Politics, morality and civility in a time of transition* (London; Faber; 1992), p.29-30

[138]*The New York Times*, July 21 1992, quoted in Sona Szomolányi, "Was the dissolution of Czechoslovakia inevitable ?", *Scottish Affairs*, n°8, Summer 1994, p.43 (emphasis added)

[139]For an analysis of the concept of "micro-states", see Tom Nairn, *Faces of Nationalism: Janus Revisited* (London, New York; Verso; 1997), pp.143-149. A special issue of *New Statesman and Society* (19/06/92, vol.5, n°207, p.18) for example lists as European micro-states Andorra, Monaco, Liechtenstein, San Marino, and the Vatican. This argument however neglects to consider the very different (stable) political and geopolitical conditions which allowed these micro-states to preserve their sovereignty (interview with Professor Rainer Bauböck, Vienna, 01/09/1999).

political-geographical unit is now viable, and the Czech and Slovak republics undoubtedly more so than most others[140].

Secondly, much more importantly, both the Czech Republic and Slovakia have achieved a lot since their independence and have proved to be economically and politically stable entities - even if some (legitimate) doubts were periodically expressed as far as the democratic credentials of the Slovak prime minister Vladimír Mečiar were concerned[141].

Thirdly, the dissolution of a binational state ridden by conflicts between Czechs and Slovaks and the establishment in its place of two homogeneous nation-states (at least in the case of the Czech Republic, since Slovakia still has an important Hungarian minority) could also arguably -even if controversially- be considered as a factor of stability in the region[142].

The real issue lies therefore in the definition of national self-determination which would equate self-determination and independence. The right of national self-determination should not be taken as a synonym for secession and it does not imply that a nation or minority is legitimate in seeking to establish an independent state:

> once the possibility for a variety of types of political association with differing forms and degrees of self-determination is appreciated, dissastified groups within existing states will not be faced with the stark choice of either remaining in a condition of total dependence within the centralized state or taking the radical step of seceding to form their own sovereign state...Exercising the right of self-determination need not always involve secession if other degrees and forms of self-determination are available[143].

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[140]See more on this in chapter 3 and 4.

[141]See ch.2 and 6

[142]Paavo Vayrynen, "Nation State: some Basic Concepts and Definitions", in Iyrki Iiovonen (ed.), *The Future of the Nation State in Europe* (Aldershot, Brookfield; Elgar; 1993), p.17: "A sense of national unity...is...the only truly necessary precondition for the emergence of stable democracy..." He argues that in societies like Yugoslavia or the former Soviet Union (and one feels tempted to add Czechoslovakia), "national disintegration is a necessary precursor to democratization...National struggles at present seem to be a necessary first step towards the emergence of stable democracy in the future, just as they were in Western Europe in the nineteenth century...".See also Richard Rose, "Eastern Europe a Decade Later: Another Great Transformation", *Journal of Democracy*, vol.10, n°1, January 1999, p.53

[143]Allen Buchanan, "Self-determination and the right to secede", *Journal of International Affairs*, vol.45, n°2, Winter 1992, p.351, quoted by Lukic and Lynch, *Europe*, p.35

Moreover, if self-determination does not presuppose accession to independence and, as Oppenheim put it, "independence is a question of degree"[144], it becomes legitimate to look at the alternatives to full independence.

In the case of Czechoslovakia, the alternative to secession[145] was assimilation or integration. The policies of "Czechoslovakisation" of the First Republic failed but the process of "state-building" began in 1918 was not necessarily *bound* to fail. The first section of this chapter has stressed the differences between Czechs and Slovaks, but it has also implicitly made evident that the two nations had a better chance to merge into a common ("Czechoslovak") nation than most others.

Our purpose here is not to discuss the ethical and moral aspects of the integration of Slovak culture into Czech identity but one could merely remark that cultural assimilation is not necessarily intrinsically condamnable. As John Stuart Mill put it in a different context,

> [n]obody can suppose that it is not more beneficial for a Breton or a Basque of French Navarre to be ... a member of the French nationality, admitted on equal terms to all the privileges of French citizenship...than to sulk on his own rocks, the half-savage relic of past times, revolving in his own little mental orbit, without participation or interest in the general movement of the world[146].

Three factors therefore explain why the potential (and possibly not "undesirable") merging between Czechs and Slovaks did not happen.

Firstly, had the First Czechoslovak Republic not been brought to a premature end under circumstances related to the international environment in 1938, Slovaks and Czechs might

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[144]Oppenheim, International Law, I 236, quoted in Cobban, *The Nation State*, p.149 ; see also Kamal S. Shehadi, "Ethnic Self-Determination and the Break-up of States", *Adelphi Papers*, 283 (December 1993), p.84 : "The doctrine and the right to self-determination do not single out independent statehood as the only possible end"

[145]Federalism, another alternative, will be examined at length in chapters 7 and 8, since it was applied in Czechoslovakia from January 1969 to December 1992.

[146]John Stuart Mill, "Considerations on Representative Government", in *On Liberty and Other Essays* (Oxford; Oxford University Press; 1998), p.431

have gradually merged into a single, unified "Czechoslovak" nation. Václav L.Beneš stresses the importance of a time factor:

> To forge a strong and stable state out of the conglomerate of different peoples located in a geographically exposed position between East and West and surrounded mostly by hostile nations, required not only great skill but also time[147]

This echoes Masaryk himself, who stated that the country "need[ed] fifty years of undisturbed peace and only then shall we have achieved what we would like to have today". History let only 20 years of peace to Czechoslovakia, but one could clearly contend that an integration based on a French centralist model was a possibility, had Czechoslovakia disposed of more time[148]. The French Third Republic, whose educational and social policies aimed at the deliberate realisation of the concept of a nation *"une et indivisible"*[149], was indeed perceived as an example to follow by Czechoslovak policy makers such as the French-educated Beneš or Štefánik, who was a French citizen and an officer in the French army during the War[150].

Secondly, the Czech elites of the new state were all too often arrogant and insensitive to Slovak demands.

The Czechs created Czechoslovakia according to their image (the *"malý český člověk"*)[151] and overestimated the willingness of the Slovaks to adopt the Czech way of life.

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[147]V.Beneš, "Czechoslovak", p.51

[148]See also Korbel, *Twentieth*: "Despite great progress during the twenty years of the Republic, another thirty years of peace was needed to permit these dissimilar societies to grow together and resolve their problems" (p.87)

[149]See for example Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870-1914* (London; Chatto and Windus; 1977).

[150]Beneš submitted and defended in 1908 a doctoral dissertation on Austria-Hungary and the Czech question at the university of Dijon (see Zbynek Zeman (with Antonín Klimek), *The Life of Edvard Beneš, 1884-1948: Czechoslovakia in Peace and War*; Oxford; Clarendon Press; 1997, pp.10-11). For a general assessment of the role of France as a model for Czech leaders, see Fejtö, *Requiem,* pp.305-365 and Kirschbaum, "Czechoslovakia", p.79

[151]Zbynek Zeman (with Antonín Klimek), *ibid.*, p.52

"Czechoslovakism" should not however be seen as a deliberately cynical strategy, a "plot" of the Czechs to destroy Slovak identity. Many Czechs (starting with Masaryk, who once declared that he was "a living embodiment of [the] Czechoslovak programme"[152]) sincerely and in good faith believed themselves to be one with the Slovaks and thought that they had a moral duty to assist their Slovak "younger brothers"[153].

To be fair, such paternalism (not altogether incomparable to the sense of mission which characterised European colonialism) could potentially only breed resentment between the two nations. Yet, the implementation of a less uniformally anticlerical religious policy, the allocation of funds to the economic development of Slovakia, the recognition of the individuality of the Slovak language as well an increased participation of Slovak elites to decision-making at the highest level (in Prague) could have gone a long way to alleviate Slovak grievances[154].

As illustrated earlier by our discussion of the notion of Czecho-Slovak reciprocity, "Czecho-slovakism" failed because it was too "Czech" and did not leave enough room to its "Slovak" component. More than a merging (or acculturation[155]) of two nations, Czechoslovakism was untenably conceived as an assimilation of the Slovaks by the Czechs[156].

Finally, the most important obstacle to the creation of a "Czechoslovak" nation was arguably that the Slovaks, like the Czechs, had by 1918 developed a sense of their national identity too

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[152]Tomáš G.Masaryk, "Slovenské vzpomienky", *Slovenské hlasy*, n°15, 22 Oct. 1917 (quoted in Marzik, "Masaryk's", p.253)

[153]This was the case of the majority of the Czech teachers who were sent to Slovakia after 1918 to help the establishment of an educational network. (The stereotype of the Slovak as the "younger brother" of the Czech will be developed in ch.2)

[154]Hoensch, "Tschechoslowakismus", p.156

[155]Michael Hechter for instance defines acculturation as the process when "the interaction of the collectivities leads to the establishment of a *new* culture, which is created by borrowing elements form *each* of the constituent groups" (*Internal Colonialism: The Celtic Fringe in British National Development, 1536-1966*; London; Routledge & Kegan Paul; 1975, p.48)(emphasis added).

[156]The Czechoslovak experience confirms that "the unity of multiethnic polities depends largely on the willingness of the dominant element not to think of itself as an ethnic category. It is not enough for the state to seek to assimilate its diverse groups; the dominant element in the state has to dissolve itself within or identify itself with a broader territorial, political, and / or ideological concept as well" (Roman Szporluk, "The Imperial Legacy and the Soviet Nationalities Problem", in Lubomyr Hajda and Mark Beissinger (eds), *The Nationalities Factor in Soviet Politics and Society* (Boulder; Westview Press; 1990; p.17)

strong to allow it to be merged easily into a larger "Czechoslovak" identity. The recent research of scholars such as Peter Brock, Owen Johnson or David Paul has nuanced and even contested Seton-Watson's gloomy portrayal of a Slovak nation on the verge of extinction before 1918, and has emphasised the relative dynamism of the Slovak national movement in the nineteenth century[157].

It was therefore extremely difficult to build a Czechoslovak nation-state, with as a starting point two nations aware of their distinctiveness (if only, as seen earlier, through their use of two separate literary languages). To use the influential theoretical framework developed by Hroch, the Slovak national movement had already begun by 1918 the last phase (phase C, characterised by the rise of a mass national movement) of its development[158] and this impeded the subsequent integration of the Czech and Slovak nations into one "Czechoslovak" nation.

Given all these elements, the division of the state was not the result of some form of "historical necessity" but the consequence of the failure of the attempts to build a "Czechoslovak" national identity -a failure which, as we have seen, was far from ineluctable.

Conclusion

Even if the distinctiveness of the Czech and Slovak nations and the artificial character of the considerations that provoked their merging in a common state in 1918 have to be acknowledged, the creation of Czechoslovakia was a "noteworthy experiment in political and social progress"[159].

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[157]Brock, *The Slovak,* pp.53-54; Paul, "Slovak Nationalism", p.145; Johnson, *Slovakia*, p.10; Robert Seton-Watson, *A History of the Czechs and Slovaks* (London, New York; Hutchinson & Co; 1943), p.283.

[158]Miroslav Hroch, *Social Preconditions of National Revival in Europe: A Comparative Analysis of the Social Composition of Patriotic Groups among the Smaller European Nations* (Cambridge; Cambridge University Press; 1985), esp p.22-24. According to Serhy Yekelchyk, this is evidenced by the emergence in the years 1890 and 1900 of political parties, such as the Slovak National Party (created in 1868, but increasingly active in the 1890s) and the Slovak People's Party (founded in 1905)(see Serhy Yekelchyk, "Nationalisme ukrainien, biélorusse et slovaque", in Chantal Delsol and Michel Maslowski (eds), *Histoire des Idées Politiques de l'Europe Centrale*; Paris; Presses Universitaires de France; 1998, p.384).

[159]the expression is from RW Seton-Watson, *25 years,* p.6

The achievements of the First republic (and its benefits for the Czechs and perhaps even more for the Slovaks) ultimately justified the creation of the new state.
This could be demonstrated at several levels.

First of all, Czechoslovakia between 1918 and 1938 remained a stable democracy and the "exception" in Central and Eastern Europe[160]. The establishment and maintenance of democratic institutions, as well as the respect of individual human rights, constituted a considerable improvement if compared to the situation under Austro-Hungarian rule. This applies with particular strength to the Slovaks, who were now free from the pressures of Magyarisation and "advanced from a position of a provincial backwater to a position of relative prominence as part of a new and interesting Central European country"[161].

The second and correlated important reason to reject the vision of Czechoslovakia as merely another kind of "prison of the nations", is the reality of Slovak cultural and political development. The interwar period was marked by a genuine and durable Slovak revival as well as the development of an educational system in Slovakia.
Before 1918, "only 0.3 percent among the Slovaks... had any education above the elementary level" and, if a Slovak had received an education, it was generally in an Hungarian school. The illiteracy rate of the Slovak population in 1921 was 15 percent, about six times as high as in the Czech lands (table 1.3).

Table 1.3 : Percentage of illiteracy in Czechoslovakia, according to census of 1921

Areas	Percentage of illiteracy of all persons over 14 years of age
Bohemia	2.4
Moravia-Silesia	3.3
Slovakia	15.0
Carpatho-Ukraine	50.1

[160] Antony Polonsky, *The Little Dictators, The history of Eastern Europe since 1918* (London, Boston; Routledge & Kegan Paul; 1975), pp.107-126

[161] Peter Petro, "Slovak Literature: Loyal, Dissident and Emigré", in H.Gordon Skilling (ed.), *Czechoslovakia 1918-88: Seventy Years from Independence* (New York; St-Martin's Press; 1991), p.200

Sources: International Labour Office, Geneva; The Rural exodus in Czechoslovakia, results of investigations made by Dr H. Böker and F.W. von Bülow, Geneva, 1935 (quoted in Teichova, *The Czechoslovak Economy*, p.15)

The first republic created a widespread network of educational institutions and teaching in Slovak became generalised, from the elementary to the university level (on 6 June 1919, the first Slovak university was founded in Bratislava[162]).

As a result of these improvements, Slovakia was endowed with an educated class and Johnson even argues that "the sheer size of the intelligentsia developed in the interwar period -nearly 30,000 men and women- was, in fact, too large to be incorporated into a Czechoslovak nationality"[163].

Seton-Watson went as far as to somewhat emphatically contend in 1924 that "no such remarkable example of cultural progress is to be found in the entire history of modern Europe, as the transformation of the school system of Slovakia during the past five years"[164].

For all these reasons, it seems reductionist to consider Czechoslovakia as an "artificial" or "ephemeral" state - or as Nazi Germany propaganda derogatorily put it a *künstliche Staat* or a *Saisonstaat*[165]:

> [w]hatever were the deficiencies of the pre-Munich Czechoslovak Republic in solving the Slovak problem, however unsound has been the theory of one

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[162]Strictly speaking, the first university (which did not however survive long - closed for financial reasons in 1490) in Slovakia was the Academia Istropolitana established in Bratislava in 1465 by the Hungarian king Matthias Corvin (Bideleux and Jeffries, *A History,* p.200; Richard Marsina, "Slovak Historiography on the Middle Ages: Early Tenth to the Early Sixteenth Century", in Elena Mannová and David Paul Daniel, *A Guide to Historiography in Slovakia*; Bratislava; Studia Historica Slovaca; Institute of Historical Studies; Slovak Academic of Sciences; 1995; p.74). A university was furthermore founded in Trnava in 1635, before being transferred to Buda in 1777 (Kirschbaum, "Les Racines", p.304)
In relation to our discussion of Czech insensitivity to Slovak culture, it should be noted that in 1918, the university founded in Bratislava took the name of Jan Amos Komensky, one the most influential figures of Czech reformation - and hardly a Slovak role model.

[163]Johnson, *Slovakia*, p.316.

[164]RW Seton-Watson, *The New,* p.51

[165]Victor S. Mamatey,"The Establishment of the Republic", in Mamatey / Luža (eds), *op.cit.*,p.28.
Hitler in a famous speech at the Sportpalast on September 26, 1938 for instance claimed that "the Czech state was born a lie" and added that "the Slovaks have little desire of being with the Czechs... the Czechs annexed Slovakia" (Max Domarus, *Hitler: Speeches and Proclamations, 1932-1945*; London; Tauris; 1992; p.1187)

'Czechoslovak people',...the creation of a 'bourgeois' Czechoslovakia in 1918 meant for the Slovaks a positive step in their political, cultural and economic development[166].

The break-up of 1993 intervened because of internal tensions and conflicts between Czechs and Slovaks, but this thesis will try to demonstrate that the *perceptions* of differences between Czechs and Slovaks would probably not have led to the division of the state, if they had not been skillfully exploited by politicians.

The *idea of "Czechoslovakism"*, the fiction of a unified Czechoslovak nation, became from very early on discredited: as we saw, it was already considerably jeopardized by Štúr's codification of a distinct Slovak language and was adopted for essentially pragmatic reasons. On the other hand, the *idea of "Czechoslovakia"*, as a common state of two nations, was still relevant and meaningful in post-Cold War Europe.
The presence of historically-based resentments between the Czechs and the Slovaks contributed to their separation, but was not sufficient in itself to justify a "divorce" and it did not make the break-up of Czechoslovakia inevitable. This dissertation will show that the maintenance of a common state was made impossible by the complex interactions between democratisation and the emergence of Czech and Slovak elites willing to use nationalism as a way to reach power.

Having argued in this first chapter that the Czechoslovak state founded in 1918 and merging Czechs and Slovaks in a common state was not as artificial as many observers alleged but clearly "acquired" a legitimacy following its achievements, and that the break-up of Czechoslovakia in 1993 was not a "historically necessary process" justified by an appeal to the principle of national self-determination, we now turn to review (and eventually reject) the argument according to which Czech and Slovak political cultures were so different as to preclude the continuing existence of a common state between the two nations.

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[166]Steiner, *The Slovak*, p.4

PART II

CHAPTER 2
CZECH AND SLOVAK POLITICAL CULTURES AND THE BREAK-UP OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA

> It is precisely the minor differences in people who are otherwise alike that form the basis of feelings of strangeness and hostility between them
>
> Sigmund Freud[167]

The second part of this dissertation considers three foundational problems which have often been deemed to suggest the inevitability of the break-up of Czechoslovakia and the impossibility of maintaining a common state between Czechs and Slovaks. The differences between Czech and Slovak political cultures, the economic consequences of the democratic transition of 1989, and the changing nature of the international environment after the end of the Cold War have been traditionally pointed out as the main explanations for the dissolution of the country. This thesis nevertheless argues that none of these three elements (on their own or in combination) satisfactorily elucidates why Czechoslovakia ultimately broke up on 31 December 1992, and will consequently proceed to advance and examine other hypotheses.
For the time being however, the more limited purpose of this chapter is to examine the first of these three potential ("classic") interpretations of the end of Czechoslovakia: the contention that the state *had* to break up because of the irreconcilable differences between Czech and Slovak political cultures.

We will accordingly first of all look for concrete evidence of authoritarian and undemocratic aspects in Slovak political culture but also, of a Czech reputedly democratic tradition: we will

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[167]quoted in Michael Ignatieff, *The Warrior's Honor: Ethnic War and the Modern Consciousness* (London; Vintage; 1999), p.48.

thus show to what extent it is legitimate to accept the notion of a "Czech-Slovak dualism" alluded to in chapter 1.

Then, a second section will try to relativise this rather manichean and somewhat one-sided appreciation of the "politico-cultural" divergences between Czechs and Slovaks by showing that: 1) Slovak political culture might not be as antidemocratic as commonly assumed and 2) the Czech political tradition is far from being uniformly and unambiguously democratic.

The section concludes that the differences between Czech and Slovak political cultures and traditions did in no way imply that their common state could not be viable and had to be divided.

Defining "democratic" political culture

Before developing these points, it is useful to define "political culture" and what makes a political culture "democratic".

Firstly, to quote Archie Brown, political culture is "the subjective perception of history and politics, the fundamental beliefs and values, the foci of identification and loyalty, and the political knowledge and expectations which are the product of the specific historical experience of nations and groups"[168]. In line with this definition, we will of course discuss and analyse the divergent reactions of the Czechs and Slovaks in confronting the post-communist transition, the introduction of democratic politics and of a free market economy after 1989, but we will also aim to put these events into a wider historical context. This implicitly supposes (for the moment) the *a priori* acceptance of the notion of "national character", which will allow some useful generalisations. The assumption behind a such a comparative analysis of Czech and Slovak political cultures is that, as Anatol Lieven bluntly put it, "character counts"[169]. This should of course not be taken to mean that there is such thing as "a" Czech or "a" Slovak character - and that every Czech and every Slovak holds the

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[168]Archie Brown, "Introduction" in Archie brown and Jack Gray (ed.), *Political culture and political change in communist states* (London and Basingstoke; The MacMillan Press; second edition 1979; 1977), p.1

[169]Anatol Lieven, "Qu'est-ce qu'une nation ? Scholarly debate and the realities of Eastern Europe", *The national interest*, N°49, Fall 1997, p.18

same views as the entire Czech and Slovak population respectively - and the second section of this chapter will therefore introduce the concept of political "sub-cultures".

Secondly, determining what characterizes the political culture of a nation as "democratic" is equally problematic. Gabriel Almond and Sydney Verba, in an influential work published in 1963, defined a "democratic" political culture as a "a pattern of political attitudes that fosters democratic stability, that in some way 'fits' the democratic political system"[170]. They argue that democracy and democratic institutions are likely to be best sustained by a "civic culture", mixing and "intrincately balancing" three types of political attitudes (participant, parochial and subject). In a similar line, Larry Diamond adds the following requirements: "tolerance of opposition and dissent ; trust in fellow political actors ; a willingness to cooperate, accommodate, and compromise; and hence, a certain flexibility, moderation, civility, and restraint in one's partisanship"[171].

The essential issue remains however to select which "indicators" are most appropriate and relevant to the assessment of the political culture of a nation. This chapter will deliberately use both quantitative (such as support for political institutions or the rule of law) and qualitative ("historical" or factual) evidence to attempt to draw as accurate and complete a picture as possible.

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[170]Gabriel Almond and Sydney Verba, *The Civic Culture* (Princeton; Princeton University Press; 1963), p.473

[171]cf Larry Diamond, "Three Paradoxes of democracy", in Larry Diamond and Marc F. Plattner (eds), *The Global Resurgence of Democracy* (Baltimore and London; The John Hopkins University Press; second edition, 1996), p.119.

Czech and Slovak political cultures: different and contradictory ?

The literature on Czechoslovakia and Czech-Slovak relations generally stresses the contradiction between the democratically-oriented Czechs and the authoritarian and populist tendencies inherent to the Slovak political scene:

> in Czechoslovakia, we are in presence of a divided political culture: overwhelmingly democratic and western in the Czech lands, in Slovakia the nation is still archaic, more nationalist and exposed to authoritarian temptations...[172].

This argument was first made, rather unsurprisingly, by Czech media and politicians, but the idea that "the contemporary reality of the Slovak political scene echoes the Balkan-oriented trends" -that "Slovakia differs from the Czech lands in its historical development, which is directed more toward the East than the history of the more Western-oriented Bohemia"[173]- subsequently became and still appears to be commonplace in Western scholarship and popular opinion. For instance, the respected observer of East European politics Zbigniew Brzezinski, claimed during a visit to Slovakia in July 1993 that Slovakia was on a par with such notoriously unstable countries as Albania or Romania[174]. Another revealing example of the Western perception of Slovakia was an article of the Belgian daily *La Libre Belgique*, which contended, following the first parliamentary elections held in independent Slovakia in

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[172]Rupnik, "Cultura Politica", p.9. Characteristic of this trend in the literature is also Otto Ulc's "Czechoslovakia's velvet divorce" (*East European Quarterly*, Fall 1996, vol.30, n°3, p.331), where he states that after 1989, "the two parts of the federation embarked upon dissimar paths: a pluralistic democratic orientation and a radical reform toward a market economy in the Czech Republic, and a socialist-leaning orientation, continuing paternalistic role of the state in the economy, along with strongly nationalist, even chauvinist overtones in the Slovak Republic".

[173]*Český deník*, 1 September 1992, quoted in Holy, *The little Czech*, p.107

[174] Silvia Miháliková, "Understanding Slovak political culture", in Fritz Plasser and Andreas Pribersky (eds), *Political culture in East Central Europe* (Aldershot, Brookfield; Abevury; 1996), p.167 ; Lubomir Rehak and Victor Kirillov, "Slovakia as a New Factor in European Politics", *International Relations*, vol.XII, n°5, August 1995, p.56.

1994 that "it is hard to make serious study of an adolescent nation, which selects according to its emotions"[175].

Finally, Slovak scholars such as Martin Bútora, Zora Bútorová, Silvia Miháliková, Grigorij Mesežnikov and Soňa Szomolányi, also tend to share a critical and somewhat pessimistic approach towards Slovak political culture[176].

Slovak "exceptionalism" or the undemocratic aspects of Slovak political culture

For many observers,"Slovak exceptionalism" made the velvet divorce inevitable:

> Slovaks were too different from Czechs, and so their joint state was only an artificially and forcibly maintained entity, incapable of an independent and democratic life[177]

This could be verified through "historical" evidence, that is by Slovak attitudes and reactions during several "turning points" of the existence of Czechoslovakia.

The first hint of the lack of Slovak democratic traditions came early in the 1920s, when the Slovak People's Party led by Hlinka, resorted to virulent nationalist and populist rhetorics to denounce the dominance of the Czechs on the political life of the First republic. As seen in chapter 1, the nationalist bloc continuously achieved electoral successes in Slovakia (37.3 % of the Slovak vote for the parliamentary elections of 1925, 28.3 % in 1929, and 30.1 % in 1935) , which was taken by Czech politicians as a proof of the political immaturity of the

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[175]http://www.slovensko.com. For a discussion of the perception of Slovakia abroad, see Miroslav Beblavý and Andrej Salner, *Tvorcovia obrazu a obraz tvorcov: vnímanie Slovenska v západných krajinách, 1989-1999* (Bratislava; Centrum pre spolocenskú a mediálnu analýzu; 1999).

[176]See Sona Szomolányi and Grigorij Mesežnikov (eds), *Slovakia: Parliamentary Elections 1994 : Causes- Consequences-Prospects* (Bratislava; Slovak political science association, Friedrich Ebert foundation; 1995).

[177]Miroslav Kusý, "Slovak exceptionalism", in Musil, *The End*, p.139

Slovaks. The stereotype of the Slovak as the Czech's slightly irresponsable and rebellious brother was then widespread, for instance in the writings of Karel Kálal as early as 1905:

> The Czech is the elder and the Slovak the younger brother. The younger brother is usually inclined to believe that the elder aims in his advice only at his own advantage. He rejects your helping hand, he kicks you...And what about you, elder brother ? Your duty is to look after the younger brother even more carefully, to make sure that when alone he will not lose his way or drown[178].

Tomáš Masaryk himself wrote to his daughter Alice, following discussions with Slovak leaders in autumn 1924: "[i]t is necessary to be patient with the Slovaks - they are children, or rather spoilt brats"[179]. The image of Slovak "ungratefulness" and "immaturity" thus became from very early on an enduring feature of Czech self-definition and this, even for the "cosmopolitan" intellectual Václav Havel, who, in October 1992, three months before the division of the state, publicly regretted the failure of "70 years of Czech efforts to civilize [the Slovaks] and 'bring them to the West'"[180].

But this condescending, yet still rather benign, image of the Slovak as a "problem child" changed in 1938 after Munich, when the radical wing of Slovak populists led by Vojtech Tuka, Ferdinand Ďurčanský and Sano Mach, not only took advantage of the weakness of the Czechs to ask and obtain their autonomy in October 1938, but also negotiated with Hitler in March 1939 the creation of a Slovak "independent" state under the protection of Nazi Germany[181]. The Slovak "clerico-fascist" state was characterised by the suppression of the democratic institutions of Masaryk's republic and the adoption of an ideology close to

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[178]Karel Kálal, *Slovensko a Slováci* (1905, p.143), quoted in Holy, *The Little.*, p.104. For a discussion of Kálal's role as a promoter of the idea of Czecho-slovak unity, see David W. Paul, *The Cultural Limits of Revolutionary Politics: Change and Continuity in Socialist Czechoslovakia* (Boulder, East European Quarterly; New York, Columbia University Press; 1979), pp.194-195.

[179]Letter 27 september 1924, quoted in Zeman (with Klimek), *The Life*, p.51

[180]See Edward Mortimer, "East of Maastricht", *Financial Times*, Wednesday 7 October 1992

[181]See Dorothea H. El Mallakh, *The Slovak Autonomy Movement, 1935-1939: A Study in Unrelenting Nationalism* (Boulder, East European Monographs; New York, Columbia University Press; 1979); Felak, *"At the Price*; Hoensch, *Die Slowakei.*

German national-socialism. The most shameful aspect of the regime was without any doubt its implementation of antisemitic policies, which led to the deportation of around two thirds of the 135 000-strong Slovak Jewish community[182]. For many Czech politicians, the role played by the Slovaks in the collapse of the First Czechoslovak republic as Hitler's "Fifth column" was to be assimilated to an ignominious treason, and in December 1943, Beneš told Stalin and Molotov

> [w]hat they [the Slovaks] have done is totally unacceptable for us [the Czechs and ...the Soviets ?]; also from the Slav point of view, we must judge them as having worked for the Germans against the Slavs[183].

The image of the Slovaks as rebellious younger brothers was replaced by the "stab in the back" thesis: for a not insignificant part of the Czechs, following in Beneš's steps, the Slovaks were from now on to be considered as potential "traitors".

But the 1938-1945 years were not to remain the only illustration of Slovak "undemocratic" tendencies and ambiguity marked the relation of the Slovaks with the communist regime. During the Prague spring and the short-lived attempt to build a "socialism with a human face" in 1968, the Slovaks appeared only half-hearted in their support for democratic reforms. Their priority was the achievement of autonomy and to the "no federalism without democracy" of the Czechs, the Slovaks usually answered "no democracy without federalism". Public opinion surveys showed that the federalization of the state was considered by the Slovaks as the most urgent political reform, whereas it came only a distant seventh on the list of Czech priorities. National equality was similarly perceived as an essential issue by 91 percent of Slovak but only 5 percent of Czech respondents[184].

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[182]See for instance Jörg K.Hoensch, *Geschichte der Tschechoslowakei* (Stuttgart, Berlin, Cologne; Verlag W.Kohlhammer; 1992), p.114; Jelinek, *The Parish;* and the influential work by Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews* (Chicago; Quadrangle Books; 1961), pp.458-473

[183]Vojtech Mastny, "The Beneš-Stalin-Molotov conservations in December 1943: new documents", *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*, Band 20, 1972, p.390

[184]*Lidová demokracie*, May 4, 1968 ; *Rudé Právo*, May 5, 1968 (quoted in Ulc, "Czechoslovakia's Velvet Divorce", p.331)

Therefore, the fact that the only lasting reform which survived the Prague spring was the adoption of a federative constitution on 28 October 1968 (signed in the castle of Bratislava on the 5Oth anniversary of the creation of Czechoslovak state; officially in force from 1 January 1969) was taken as a new betrayal by many Czechs[185].

Similarly, the influential role played during the years of "normalisation" by Slovak politicians like Gustáv Husák (general secretary of the Czechoslovak Communist Party from 1969 to 1987 and president of the republic from 1975 to 1989) and Vasil Biľak (a neo-Stalinist hardliner, number two of the regime) did not help to enhance the democratic credentials of the Slovaks, especially given the weak Slovak participation to dissident organisations. Charter 77 was for instance at the time of its creation signed by 243 personalities, among whom only one, Miroslav Kusý, was a Slovak, and by 1978, still only eight Slovaks, most of them residing in Prague, had formally endorsed the document[186].

One explanation for this apparent lack of active Slovak involvement in dissident activities is the different nature of the normalisation that affected the two regions. Whereas the Czech lands experienced what Louis Aragon described as a "Biafra of the Soul" and some of its brightest artists, writers or scientists were forced to emigrate or entered the ranks of the dissidents, the impact of the end of the Prague spring in Slovakia was more limited. The federalisation of the state and the high-profile position of Slovak politicians during the "normalisation" years eroded the potential support for oppositional movements and discontent with the regime was much less widespread than in the Czech republic[187]. The "grey zone" between collaboration with the regime and passive resistance was more important in Slovakia than in the Czech lands and the velvet revolution which ultimately put an end to communist rule in 1989 has often been described as a mostly Czech event.

These past "ambiguities" of Slovak political culture are essential to an understanding of the break-up of Czechoslovakia, because they have been linked to certain disturbingly

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[185]See for instance Robert Dean, *Nationalism and Political Change in Eastern Europe: The Slovak Question and the Czechoslovak Reform Movement* (Denver; University of Denver; 1973)

[186]Figures in Wehrlé, *Le divorce*, p.254 ; See also H. Gordon Skilling, *Charter 77 and Human Rights in Czechoslovakia* (London; George Allen & Unwin; 1981), pp.54-58.

[187]Otto Ulc for instance argues that many Slovaks felt that Charter 77 was "an insidious maneuver aimed at discrediting President Husák *because* he was a Slovak" (Ulc, "Czechoslovakia's velvet divorce", p.331)

antidemocratic aspects of the Slovak political scene since 1989 and the start of the democratic transition.

The so-called "hyphen war" over the name of the country in the spring 1990 was probably the first expression of separatist tendencies among the Slovak population. Václav Havel's suggestion to drop the adjective "socialist" from the official name of the country, "Czechoslovak socialist republic" was accepted by the National Assembly, but a constitutional row developed when Slovak deputies proposed to call the state "Czecho-slovak republic". The hyphen was controversial and rejected by Czech representatives, because it was to them an attack on the essential integrity of the state, and a compromise -the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic- eventually had to be found. For most Czechs, the hyphenated name was painfully reminiscent of the official denomination of the country during the semi-authoritarian "second" republic, which lasted from the Munich agreement until March 1939.

However, the most problematic element of the Slovak political scene from 1989 to 1993 was the nostalgia expressed by a part of the Slovak population for both the fascist Slovak state of 1939-1945 and the communist regime.
The success in June 1990 in the first free parliamentary elections of the post-communist era of the Slovak National Party (*Slovenská Národná Strana*-SNS), which campaigned on an openly separatist, anti-Czech and anti-semitic platform and became with 14 % of the votes the third political force in the Slovak National Council, appeared to demonstrate the appeal of ultra right-wing extremism to the Slovak population. Incidents during the demonstrations of 1990 and 1991 marking the aniversary of the declaration of independence of the Slovak state on 14 March 1939, as well as repeated "(egg") attacks on Havel during his visits to Bratislava (notably during the celebrations of the foundation of the Czechoslovak state on 28 October 1991) convinced many Czechs that the Slovaks were proud of their fascist heritage[188].
Antisemitism, one of the traditional indicators of social and ethnic illiberalism, also reemerged in Slovakia: pro-federation Slovaks were "threatened with lynching and accused of

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[188]Holy, *The Little*, p.109

'not speaking Slovak but Hebrew'" and Havel was described in a Slovak paper as a "swinish Jew" conspiring against the Slovak nation[189].

Moreover, a positive attitude towards specific aspects of the communist regime was widespread among the Slovak population.
On a mediatic scale, this was evidenced by the participation of the Slovak Christian democrat leader Ján Čarnogurský to the burial of Husák in 1992[190] but it was also extensively documented by the opinion polls carried out after 1989. In October 1993, 51 % of the Slovaks "saw more disadvantages in the (then) present political system than in the old one" and in May 1994, 31.3 % of the Slovaks declared that the Czechoslovak Communist Party had had a primarily positive role[191].
Slovaks tended to favour the continuing intervention of the state in the economy and in May-June 1991 58 % preferred a controlled economy - whereas the Czechs overwhelmingly and in a completely opposite way supported 'free' economy (54 %)[192]. Slovaks were also more likely to believe that the state has the responsability to fight against unemployment even at the price of a slowdown or even a suspension of the economic reforms (34 percent, compared to only 9 percent in the Czech lands according to a 1990 survey[193]).

The following table shows how Czech and Slovak expectations markedly differed in 1990:

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[189]Otto Ulc, "The Bumpy road of Czechoslovakia's Velvet revolution", *Problems of communism*, May-June 1992, p.30. For a discussion of the resurgence of antisemitism in Slovakia since 1989, see for instance: Martin Bútora and Zora Bútorová, "'A Wary Approach': Attitudes towards Jews and Jewish Issues in Slovakia", *East European Jewish Affairs*, vol.23, n°1, 1993, pp.5-20 ; Yeshayahu Jelinek, "A Whitewash in Color: Revisionist Historiography in Slovakia", *East European Jewish Affairs*, vol.24, n°1, 1994, pp.117-130.

[190]Holy, *The Little*, p.110. Čarnogurský 's attendance was somewhat paradoxical since he was one of the last political prisoners of Husák's regime and was freed only during the revolution of 1989.

[191]Silvia Miháliková, "Understanding", p.171.

[192]Association for Independent Social Analysis (Prague), *Czechs and Slovaks compared, A survey of political and economic behaviour* (Glasgow; University of Strathclyde; 1992), p.22

[193]Sharon L.Wolchik, "The politics of ethnicity in post-communist Czechoslovakia", *East European Politics and Societies*, vol.8, n°1, Winter 1994, p.182

Table 2.1

	Czech Republic (%)	Slovak Republic (%)
Satisfied with the current political situation	70	58
Agree that unemployment should be avoided even at the cost of hindering or even suspending economic reform	19	34
Would select a harsher and more accelerated version of economic reform	61	51
Would accede to 50 percent price increases in essential goods	53	39
Willing to accept the loss of current employment	48	37
Fears about a decline in the standard of living	60	70
Would strike following a considerable increase in the cost of essential goods	37	50
Would strike if major cut in social security	62	61
Think that the state should bear complete responsability for finding employement for every citizen	32	47
Think that the state should bear complete responsability for ensuring a decent standard of living for each citizen	34	46
Willing to achieve a top level in job or occupation	39	44
Prefer being self-employed, intend to start a private enterprise	7	7
Plan to set up private enterprise	14	13

Source: Marek Boguszak, Ivan Gabal and Vladimír Rak, *Československo leden 1990* (Prague; Skupina pro nezávislou socialní analyzu; 1990)[194]

[194]quoted in James R.Millar and Sharon L.Wolchik, "Introduction: the social legacies and the aftermath of communism", in James Millar and Sharon L.Wolchik (eds), *The Social Legacy of Communism* (Cambridge and New York; Cambridge University Press; 1994), p.9

The reluctance of the Slovaks to support unconditionally economic reforms is not a necessarily valid test of their democratic (or in this case, "un"-democratic) leanings and democracy is not synonymous with capitalism and free-market economics. Yet, in the eyes of Czech (and subsequently, Western) opinion leaders, the Slovaks came to be perceived as regretful of the communist era - and therefore, quickly branded as "anti-democrats".

Given all this, it would appear tempting to see the break-up of Czechoslovakia as the unfortunate consequence of an upsurge of Slovak authoritarian tendencies, which have proved to be "unrelenting"[195] during the existence of the common state with the Czechs.
The development of the Slovak political scene after the achievement of independence in January 1993, and especially the personality of Vladimír Mečiar, Prime minister from June 1992 to October 1998 (with an interruption from March to October 1994, when a coalition led by Jozef Moravčik replaced him[196]) furthermore retrospectively confirms this impression[197].

Czech political culture: democracy as "destiny" ?

This bleak painting of Slovak political culture contrasts with the usually idyllic portrayal of the democratic traditions of their Czech neighbours.
Virtually all the literature on Czech political culture or national identity points out that the Czechs have had a concrete experience of democracy since the last decades of the Habsburg empire[198]. As discussed in chapter 1, the Czech lands had already by the 1880s a significant exposure to pluralist political life and the universal suffrage was introduced in the Austrian

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[195]The expression is used, though mostly in the context of the First Republic, by EL'Mallakh, *The Slovak.*

[196]Mečiar was also Slovak prime minister from June 1990 to April 1991.

[197]See chapters 5 and 6 for a discussion of Mečiar's personality and political "tactics".

[198]See for instance Garver, "The Czechoslovak", pp.25-56 ; Gale Stokes, *Three Eras of Political Change in Eastern Europe* (New York and Oxford; Oxford University Press; 1997), pp.38-44.

part of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy (Cisleithania) in 1907. Moreover, the absence of an influential native nobility after the repression that followed the Battle of the White Mountain favoured the emergence of the bourgeoisie and the middle classes on the political arena and is usually considered to have entrenched egalitarian and democratic values in Czech society[199]. The endurance of Czech democratic traditions was further demonstrated when the Czech-dominated first republic remained a working democracy until the Munich agreements.

Similarly, during the communist years, the "Prague Spring" has been interpreted as an illustration of the continuity of Czech democratic traditions[200]. The role of Czech intellectuals in the reform movement showed that Czech creativity still existed. The writers Milan Kundera, Josef Škvorecký and Ivan Klíma, the playwright Václav Havel, the directors Miloš Forman and Jiří Menzel, and many others, spearheaded the revival of the Czech traditionally democratic "dominant" political culture - strikingly different from the regime-imposed "official" political culture[201].
The communist regime even made certain concessions to this "dominant" political culture and the maintenance of a presidential function (a form of "tribute" to the interwar republic) was one of the specific features of Czecho(slovak) communism[202].

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[199]See for instance David W. Paul, "The Repluralization of Czechoslovak Politics in the 1960s", *Slavic Review*, vol.33, N°4, December 1974, p.730. Scholars such as Joseph Rothschild and George Schöpflin compare the case of the Czech lands with the case of Poland or Hungary and contends that one of the major causes of the resilience of Czechoslovak democracy during the interwar period was the influence of the Czech middle classes on the political process (Joseph Rothschild; *East Central Europe Between the two World Wars*; Seattle and London; University of Washington Press; 1974; pp.75-76; George Schöpflin, *Politics in Eastern Europe, 1945-1992*; Oxford and Cambridge, Mass.; Blackwell; 1993) .

[200]See for instance Paul, "The Repluralization", pp.721-740 and *The Cultural*; A.H Brown, "Political Change in Czechoslovakia", *Government and Opposition*, vol.4, n°2, Spring 1969, pp.169-194. Significantly perhaps, the term "Prague Spring" (and not "Czechoslovak") has been widely adopted (one exception is the recent François Fejtö and Jacques Rupnik (eds), *Le Printemps Tchécoslovaque 1968* (Paris; Editions Complexe; 1999).

[201]I use here the distinction made by Archie Brown between the dominant political culture and the official political culture: "In Communist states, in particular, the official political culture is promoted incessantly through the mass media, in educational establishments, and through other agencies of socialisation. But do the official values, orientations and perceptions actually dominate the minds of the majority of the citizens ?... The official political culture and the dominant political culture may coincide, substantially overlap, or be at considerable variance from one another, and the precise nature of the relationship is one of the problems which students of political culture should be tackling..." (Archie Brown, "Introduction" in Brown and Gray, *Political culture*, pp.7-8)

[202]See for instance Kurt Glaser, *Czecho-Slovakia: A Critical History* (Caldwell, Idaho; Caxton Publishers; 1961), p.156

The communist movement had furthermore asserted before its Bolshevisation and the nomination as general secretary of Klement Gottwald in 1929 its ideological and organisational autonomy towards Moscow. The party could at its creation in 1920 count on the support of the largest, best organised and politically active working class in Eastern Europe with strong social-democratic leanings and in 1925, 70 per cent of its membership - including its leader Bohumír Šmeral- was constituted by former social democrats. Up to 1929, the Czechoslovak Communist Party tried to establish its democratic credentials: it became regularly criticised by the Comintern for its alleged "deviationism" and even earned for itself the qualificative of "worst section of the International"[203].

The democratic character of Czech political life seemed vindicated after the fall of communism and the "velvet revolution" (a mostly Czech event). The end of forty years of communist rule occurred without violence and has been traditionally celebrated as an example of the power of civil resistance[204]. The elevation to the presidency of the respected intellectual Havel was taken as a sign of Czech *kulturnost*, the "high culture" of the Czech nation[205]. The relative ease of adaptation of the Czechs after 1989 and the fact that they came to be considered as the most promising nation of the former communist bloc (there were talks of a "Czech miracle")[206] were branded as illustrative of the pragmatism and the quality of the Czech political elite: the federal Finance minister, then Czech prime minister, Václav Klaus received (at least until 1997) general praise for his management of economic reforms.

Contrarily to the Slovaks, the Czechs hence benefited from an optimistic assessment of their ability to (re)join the camp of Western so-called democratic nations. The continuity of the Czech democratic political culture, in spite of six years under the Nazi regime and four

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[203]Rupnik, *Histoire*; or Schöpflin, *Politics*, pp.33-36 and 52. Otto Bauer, one of the leaders of the Austrian social democrats, used to quip that he knew of "only two outstanding social-democratic parties. The first, is of course, the Austrian Party ; the second is the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia" (Rupnik, *Histoire*, p.61).

[204]See for instance Garton Ash, *We The People*, pp.78-130 ; William H. Luers, "Czechoslovakia: Road to Revolution", *Foreign Affairs*, 69:2, Spring 1990; Adam Roberts, *Civil Resistance in the East European and Soviet Revolutions* (Cambridge MA; The Albert Einstein Institution; 1991), pp.22-24.

[205]The concept of *kulturnost* is for instance discussed by Holy, *The Little*, p.85

[206]see Magdalena Hadjisky, "République Tchèque: la fin annoncée du 'miracle tchèque' de Václav Klaus ?", *Relations Internationales et Stratégiques*, n°26, été 1997, p.75

decades of communism, made logical and highly legitimate the "return to Europe" of the nation. The break-up of an authoritarian regime imposed from outside acted as a resumption and a long overdue reassertion of the true democratic and humanist "meaning of Czech history" (*smysl českých dejin*) identified by Palacký or Masaryk.
The adoption of a manichean vision of the Czechs as democratically-oriented and of the Slovaks as subject to worrying and unrelenting authoritarian tendencies is however conceptually untenable.

From a theoretical and methodological point of view, the historicist conception of history as having a "meaning" and of political culture and traditions as "continuous" is flawed. The conservative historian and intellectual foe of Masaryk, Josef Pekař and perhaps even more importantly, the philosopher Jan Patočka, contended that Czech history hardly answered a predetermined plan or providence[207]. "Democracy" is not a collective and continuous attribute of the Czechs, while the Slovaks would be *ad perennis* bound to be "authoritarian". Political cultures are most of the time heterogeneous and the melting pot of different "sub-cultures", which compete with each other:

> A fundamental feature of a country's political culture -its heterogeneity- must also be recognized. Even if a dominant pattern may be discerned, the political culture will be fragmented, with more or less important sub-cultures always present[208].

A closer look at the "subcultures" *within* Czech and Slovak political cultures is therefore necessary, and the next section argues that the notion of Slovak "exceptionalism" is an inadequate description of a Slovak political culture, which is far from being only characterised by recurrent outbursts of authoritarianism. Consequently, Czech political culture is also not as unambiguously "democratic" as usually assumed, thus prompting a

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[207]Patočka argued that "discontinuity is the starting point when thinking about Czech history and it must be taken into account when one takes side regarding the "philosophy of Czech history" (Jan Patočka, "La philosophie de l'histoire tchèque" (*Filosofie českých dejin*), in *L'Idée de l'Europe en Bohême*, Grenoble; Editions Jérôme Millon; 1991; pp.130-131). See also Josef Pekař, *Der Sinn der tschechischen Geschichte* (Brünn/ Leipzig/Wien; Verlag Rudolf M.Rohrer; 1937); Jan Patočka, "Does History Have a Meaning", in *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History* (Chicago and LaSalle, Illinois; Open Court; 1996), pp.56-58.

[208]H.Gordon Skilling, "Stalinism and Czechoslovak political culture", in Robert C. Tucker (ed.), *Stalinism: Essays in Historical Interpretation* (New York; WW Norton & Company; 1977), p.259.

reassessment of the idea that the break-up of Czechoslovakia was the result of the differences between Czech and Slovak political cultures.

A refutation of "Slovak exceptionalism"

A different interpretation of Slovak political culture could shed light on certain positive aspects of Slovak political culture.

The fascist nature of the Slovak state of 1939-1945 is undeniable, but the real level of support of the Slovak population for the regime should not be overestimated. There was clearly in Slovakia a strong demand for more autonomy and even for independence, but the Slovaks' backing of the national-socialist ideology of the puppet state was more limited and overwhelmingly conditioned by the initial satisfaction with the achievement of national self-determination for the first time in their history.

The Slovak national uprising of August 1944 (according to the Slovak historian Ľubomír Lipták, "one of the greatest armed resistance activities carried out in German-controlled territory during the Second World War")[209] even suggests that the resistance was much more active in Slovakia than in the Czech lands -the protectorate of Bohemia-Moravia[210].More controversially, and regardless of the resistance activities of the Slovaks, the setting up of a Nazi-puppet state did not and does not in itself mean that Slovak political culture is uniformly undemocratic (the same way the exactions committed under the Vichy state in wartime France have usually not been assumed to make French political culture as a whole undemocratic).

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[209]Ľubomír Lipták, *A history of Slovakia and the Slovaks*, Bratislava, 1992, p.15, quoted in Miroslav Kusý, "Slovak exceptionalism", pp.141-142.

[210]For a comparison, see Vojetch Mastny, *The Czechs Under Nazi Rule: The Failure of National Resistance, 1939-1942* (New York, London; Columbia University Press; 1971), who emphasizes the relative passivity of the Czech population. (for an account of the assassination of the Reichsprotektor Heydrich, the most significant act of resistance in Bohemia-Moravia, see Callum MacDonald, *The Killing of SS Obergruppenführer Reinhard Heydrich*; Basingstoke and London; Papermac; 1990).

Furthermore, a reassessment of the extent of the Slovak participation in the opposition to the communist regime is needed.

Firstly, organisations such as Charter 77 and the Committee for the Defence of the Unjustly Prosecuted (*Výbor na ochranu nespravedlivě stíhaných*, or VONS) were perceived as essentially Czech circles, and the Czechs appeared reluctant to involve Slovaks in their activities[211]. Alexander Dubček (a Slovak) claimed that

> [t]he Charter was a Czech response to the situation. In Slovakia, we agreed with virtually every idea in it, but we had our own ways to support these ideals[212].

Secondly, the effectiveness of the communist regime in preventing the establishment of contacts between Czech and Slovak dissidents cannot be underestimated. It was in practice very difficult to diffuse the message of Charter 77 in Slovakia and the police authorities managed to hinder communication and isolate Slovak activists, even by means of arrests. For instance, "[t]he Slovak dissident Miroslav Kusý has told how his attempt to meet a friend in Prague was reduced to nothing by his arrest by the Prague police authorities and his return by the first train to Bratislava. In a similar way, some chartists coming from Prague to visit him were arrested in front of his residence in Bratislava and sent back manu militari to Prague"[213].

Finally, expressions of dissent appeared in Slovakia under different forms than in the Czech lands, most spectacularly through the Catholic Church and the pilgrimages it organised[214], but also through various interest groups such as the ecological association *Bratislava nahlas* (Bratislava Aloud)[215].

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[211]Gordon Skilling, *Charter 77*, pp.54-55.

[212]Alexander Dubček (with Jiří Hochman), *Hope Dies Last: the Autobiography of Alexander Dubček* (London; Harper Collins; 1993), p.264

[213]Wehrlé, *Le Divorce*, p.255

[214]See pp.35-36

[215]Martin Bútora, "The roots of the Revolution in Slovakia", 15/12/1989, in Tim D. Whipple (ed.), *After the Velvet revolution: Václav Havel and the new leaders of Czechoslovakia speak out* (London; Freedom House; 1991), p.219.

The Slovak contribution to the fall of communism was far from insignificant and the creation of the Slovak movement Public Against Violence in November 1989 eventually followed by only one day the establishment of its Czech counterpart, the Civic Forum.

More generally, the notion of Slovak "exceptionalism" cannot adequately encompass the complexity and nuances of Slovak political culture.
Kusý (now an academic at Comenius university in Bratislava) has relativised and refuted the accuracy of the five main presumed characteristics of the Slovak compared to the Czechs: (1) "Slovaks are more nationalistically oriented", (2) "Slovaks are more separatistically oriented", (3) "Slovaks are more Christian-oriented", (4) "Slovaks are more left-wing" and (5) "Slovaks are more eastwardly oriented"[216].

First, concerning the nationalist orientation of the Slovaks, Kusý notes that:

> [i]n spite of all the nationalistic excesses which appeared in Slovakia after the 1989 revolution..., Slovakia did not suffer too severely from over-excited nationalistic passions: there were no wounded or dead, no looted shops, and there was no burning of state buildings.[217]

This is important in its own right, since it clearly puts the Slovaks among the nations of the former communist bloc where the democratic transition and the subsequent resurgence of nationalism have taken place without violence[218]: "the Slovak nation as a whole remained

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[216]Kusý, "Slovak Exceptionalism", p.140

[217]*ibid.*, p.143

[218]See Bollerup and Christensen, *Nationalism*, pp.134-135. This is however to an extent hardly a worthy distinction for two reasons: first, the revolutions of 1989 and the democratic transitions in which the former communist bloc engaged have been overwhelmingly (Romania and of course Yugoslavia being the main exceptions) defined by their peaceful character (see for instance Karen Henderson and Neil Robinson, *Post-Communist*; London, New York; Prentice Hall; 1997; p.28) and second, there are, as we shall see throughout this dissertation, several other explanations for the non-violence of the Czecho-slovak divorce (most significantly perhaps, the absence of an history of hatred between the two nations, the "clarity" and straightforwardeness of ethnic boundaries between Czechs and Slovaks, and the bipolarity of the state).

relatively indifferent towards [the nationalist] movement" and "nationalism did not become a mass, nationwide movement"[219].

The second stereotype of the Slovaks as "separatist" is related to their "nationalism", and equally contestable. The refusal of the Slovak separatists to organise a referendum about the independence constitutes, according to Kusý, a clear indication of their awareness of their lack of support among the Slovak population and public opinion polls (see chapter 6) consistently demonstrated that the majority of Slovaks favoured the continuation of Czechoslovakia.

Third, Slovaks are more religiously-oriented than their secular Czech neighbours but the political implications of this are not necessarily clear-cut. The Slovak Christian Democrats appear to follow the pattern of "secularisation of Christian politics" evident in Western European Christian Democratic political parties such as the German CDU, and Kusý contends that "the Slovak voter behaved in basically the same way as voters in other developed European countries, including the Czech Lands"[220].

However, disproving the characterisation of the Slovaks as "more left wing" and "more eastwardly oriented" seems more problematic.
The apparent nostalgia of the Slovaks for the communist era is more complex than usually interpreted. The electoral support for the communist party in Slovakia after the velvet revolution tended to be lower than in the Czech lands -during the parliamentary elections of June 1990, 13 % compared with 15 %. These figures are however not especially significant since many of the themes developed by the communist party (necessity of the maintenance of the role of state in the economy for instance) were part of the mainstream Slovak political scene and therefore included in the electoral programme of most Slovak parties. Yet, after the split of the Czechoslovak communist party into a Czech and a Slovak branch, whereas the Czech party refused to engage itself on the path of "refoundation", the Slovak party under the

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[219]This for instance tentatively made Slovak nationalism very different from the much more widespread and "mass-supported" Serb nationalism (see for instance Branimir Anzulovic, *Heavenly Serbia: From Myth to Genocide*; London; Hurst & Company; 1999). The role of Slovak nationalism in the breakup will be discussed in detail in chapters 6 and 7.

[220]Kusý, "Slovak exceptionalism", p.149

leadership of Peter Weiss quickly abandoned the label "communist" and resolutely became a reformed communist party on the model of the Hungarian or Polish parties[221].

More generally, the Slovaks were not against the market economy in itself, but were clearly suspicious of the economic policies (somewhat insensitive to Slovak interests) of Václav Klaus. Pointing out the ambiguity of the Slovak attitude towards the communist regime as evidence of the undemocratic features of Slovak political culture is to apply a selective and one-sided test of "democracy" since, as the next chapter will demonstrate, for agrarian societies such as Slovakia, communism as an *economic* system could tentatively be seen as "democratic". Communist economic policies made the industrialisation of Slovakia one of their priorities and managed to a not inconsiderable extent to "elevate" Slovakia and reduce the differential with the Czech lands[222].

Finally, Kusý dismisses the fifth element of the alleged Slovak 'exceptionalism' by referring to Samo's state in the seventh century, Cyril and Methodius, the Slovak Reformation or the Western influences that led to the nineteenth-century national revival[223]. The resort to historical evidence, and very often 'myths', appears however in this context unconvincing. More concretely, most Slovaks were and are still convinced that their destiny lies in a 'return to Europe', alongside the Czechs. Suffice it to refer in this respect to the vision expressed by Ján Čarnogurský, Slovak prime minister from April 1991 to June 1992, of the adhesion of a sovereign Slovakia to the European Union, or to the declaration of the Slovak president Michal Kováč in the spring 1994 that "Slovakia wants to be a stable, democratic country, a country that wants to join Europe's political and economic structures"[224]. There was a great perplexity among the Slovak population after the non-inclusion of the country in the first waves of the eastward expansion of Nato and European Union and the comment of an

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[221]See for instance Anna Grzymala-Busse, "Reform Efforts in the Czech and Slovak Communist Parties and Their Successors, 1988-1993", *East European Politics and Societies*, volume 12, n°3, Fall 1998, pp.442-471

[222]See chapters 3 and 7

[223]Kusý, "Slovak", pp. 152-153

[224]quoted in Leff, *The Czech,* p.243. Michal Kováč represented however only one strand of Slovak thinking (although Vladimír Mečiar wanted economic integration without political change or obligations). See chapter 4, p. 160

anonymous Slovak rapported in an article of *the Guardian* on Saturday 5 July 1997 is more explicit than many long political speeches:

> If the Czechs are allowed into Nato, how come the Slovaks are not ? It's ridiculous. We've been the same country since 1918. There's hardly a difference between us. But Nato will make the differences bigger. I don't know what I 'm supposed to make of this front line. History is full of such paradoxes.[225]

The dark sides of Czech political culture

Having considered the positive aspects of a Slovak political culture usually held as anti-democratic, we now turn to the search for the "dark" sides of Czech political culture.
A certain attachment to democratic values and political pluralism characterises Czech political culture but this democratic tradition has been interrupted for nearly fifty years: from 1939 to 1945 under the Nazi protectorate and from 1948 to 1989 under the communist regime[226]. Czech political culture is therefore best defined by what Gordon Skilling calls "a dialectic of continuity and discontinuity"[227].

The first problematic aspect of Czech political culture is the gift of the Czechs for passive resistance or "Schweikism"[228]. Schweik, the famous hero of Jaroslav Hasek's novel who enlists in the Austro-Hungarian army during the first world war and constantly ridicules the authorities by being over-zealous, has become the symbol of a certain Czech attitude in front of political adversity and the proof that "[t]he strength of the nation is not in its moral

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[225] *The Guardian*, Saturday July 5 1997. See also Karen Henderson, "Slovakia and the democratic criteria for EU accession", in Karen Henderson (ed.), *Back to Europe: Central and Eastern Europe and the European Union* (London; UCL Press; 1999), pp.221-240.

[226] The second (1938-39) and third (1945-48) republics were moreover only "semi"-democracies, during which the role of political opposition was seriously constrained.

[227] H.Gordon Skilling, "Czechoslovak political culture: pluralism in an international context", in Archie Brown (ed.), *Political Culture and Communist studies* (London; Macmillan; 1984), p.130.

[228] See Paul, *The Cultural*, p.236.

victories ... but in its ability to survive three hundred years of Habsburg oppression, six years of German occupation, and forty-three years of communism through pretended loyalty and tacit or explicit collaboration"[229].

The Czech unwillingness to resist a stronger power could be perceived as a manifestation of political clear-sightedness, since openly confronting or fighting the Habsburgs, Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union would have endangered the long-term survival of the small Czech nation. This was at least how leaders such as Beneš justified the decision to accept the Munich's ultimatum - opposing it to the distinctly more proactive yet desesperate and ultimately harmful attempt of the Polish army to fight Wehrmacht tanks with cavalry[230].

This positive reading of "Schweikism" is however contestable. Schweik is a sympathetic literary figure but whether he is an intelligent man deeply aware of his nation's best interest, a simpleton or (and more likely, I would argue) simply a coward unable to stand up to an oppressive regime in a determined way[231] remains a matter of debate:

> Schweik's legacy is ambiguous. He can serve as an alibi during periods of oppression and dictatorship, because he replaces all force of resistance by an apparent conformism, which seeks to justify itself by hidden motives in order to dissimulate its own cowardice...[232]

Czech history has often been one of fatalism and resignation in front of a superior power. The failure of the Czechs to defend their country in 1938 - leading to the "Munich syndrome" and the debate around the question "could we have fought?"- is in a way merely a reflection of what Gordon Skilling calls the "capitulationist complex in the Czech nature"[233]: "[t]he

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[229]Holy, *The little.*, p.130

[230]See Eduard Beneš, *Memoirs of Dr Eduard Beneš: From Munich to New War and new Victory* (London; George Allen & Unwin; 1954)

[231]See for instance Mastny (*Czechs*, p.160): "Only a superficial reader ...can consider [Schweik's] behavior a form of resistance. In reality, 'Schweikism', the ostensibly zealous though sceptical compliance often typical in repressive societies, was little more than the sly opportunism of the 'little man' - which, however, extended also to the highest ranks".

[232]Michel, *Histoire*, pp.324-325.

[233]Gordon Skilling, "Czechoslovak political culture", p.128.

average Czech, confronted with what he believes to be superior power, prefers to bend and presence his strength for a better opportunity, rather than to break in a gesture of bold defiance"[234].

Similarly, the reactions of the Czechs towards the communist regime were ambiguous: the Prague Coup in February 1948 did not meet with the resistance of the population and the communists had a sizable measure of support among the Czechs, as illustrated by the (mostly free) parliamentary elections of 1946, when the communist party easily became the first political force in the Czech lands with 42 percent of the votes. Interestingly, Slovakia proved a much less fertile ground for communist rhetoric, and the communists only attracted 30 percent of the Slovak electorate, far behind the resounding 62 percent of the votes polled by the Democratic Party[235].

What is however perhaps even more significant is the passivity of the Czechs after the crushing of the Prague Spring in August 1968[236]. The weakness of the Czech dissent suggests that the "normalisation" was, if not actively supported, at least tolerated by most Czechs. The influence of dissident organisations was essentially limited to the circle of Prague intellectuals (the "Prague intellectual ghetto") and did not have a visible impact on the average Czech.

The "normalisation" essentially reposed on the existence of an implicit social contract between the regime and the population: "we provide you with material advantages, a free health care system and a job, but you pretend to believe in the official slogans". By raising

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[234]Edward Táborský, "The Triumph and Disaster of Eduard Beneš", *Foreign Affairs*, July 1958, vol.36, n°4, p.681

[235]For an assessment of the "indigenous" support for the communist regime, see Jacques Rupnik, "The Roots of Czech Stalinism", in Raphael Samuel and Gareth Stedman Jones (eds), *Culture, Ideology and Politics: Essays for Eric Hobsbawm* (London; Routledge; 1982), pp.302-320. For a personal account of the attraction of communism to the Czech population, see the memories of one of the leaders of the Prague Spring, Zdeněk Mlynář (*Nachtfrost: Erfahrungen auf dem Weg vom realen zum menschlichen Sozialismus*; Köln, Frankfurt am Main; Europäische Verlagsantalt; 1978, pp.7-32).

[236]even if the attitudes of the Czechs in the first weeks and months after the Warsaw pact invasion - most famously, Jan Palach's self-immolation in January 1969 - could be legitimately considered as an illustrative example of passive resistance (see for example Kieran Williams, *The Prague Spring and its aftermath: Czechoslovak Politics, 1968-1970;* Cambridge; Cambridge University Press; 1997, p.42).

living standards and the access to consumer goods, the regime was, especially during the 70s, effectively able to curb and stem political contestation[237].

In the seventies and most of the eighties, Czech democratic tradition was "under the ice"[238] and what Carol Leff calls the "typewriter culture" of the Czech dissent sharply contrasted with the vitality of the Hungarian and Polish underground societies. Havel was hardly exagerating when he declared in August 1988 that

> [W]hen friends from the Polish Solidarity whom we meet occasionally at the Czech-Polish border ask how many people Charter 77 has behind it, I feel like answering that while there are millions of people behind Solidarity, there are only millions of ears behind Charter 77[239].

After decades of authoritarian rule, it looked in 1989 as if Czech political culture needed to be "de-communised", almost in the same way as Masaryk urged his compatriots to "de-austrianise" (*odrakoustet*) after the end of Habsburg domination[240]. The pragmatism characteristic of Czech political culture was during the years of domination what could be called a *reverse* or an *inverted pragmatism*. In order to establish a durable democracy, the Czechs will need to transform this *negative* pragmatism (synonymous of passivity and resignation in front of a stronger power) into a more *positive* pragmatism, a forward-looking and clear-cut support and defence of their democratic institutions.

Despite the militaristic aspects of Czech traditions (most notably the Hussite warriors led by the blind general Jan Žižka or the Siberian anabasis of the Czechoslovak legions in 1918/19) and the lessons of Masaryk (a consistent opponent of Leo Tolstoy's doctrine of non-resistance

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[237]The widespread possession of (low-quality) country cottages (called *chaty*) was one of the most visible illustration of Czech "inner" emigration: by the late 1980s, Czechoslovakia ranked second in the world in the number of summer cottages per capita and 80 percent of the population had access to them.

[238]Timothy Garton Ash, "Czechoslovakia under the ice", in *The uses of adversity: essays on the fate of Central Europe* (New York; Vintage Books; 1990), pp.61-70.

[239]*The Times*, 12 August 1988

[240]see ch.1

to evil)[241], Czechs have been for most of their modern history at best "reluctant democrats", who often proved unwilling to fight for their ideals.

Having said that, we proceed to refute, or at least somewhat critically reassess, two Czech "myths": first of all, we show why the reference to the First interwar Czechoslovak republic as a model democracy is to an extent partial and, secondly, we endeavour to demonstrate that there is a Czech nationalism - and that the Slovaks are not the only ones to be (to go back to Kusý's expression) "nationalistically oriented".

First, the traditionally idyllic vision of the first republic has to be nuanced. If pluralism, regular free elections, freedom of press and of association, were respected during the twenty years between 1918 and 1938, the picture also includes several less "glorious" elements[242]. The Czechoslovak democracy has often been qualified as "praetorian" because of its reliance on informal, extra-parliamentary yet highly influential power structures. The most significant of these groups was the *Petka* ("The Five"), an informal council constituted of the leaders of the initially five political parties members of the governmental coalition. The Petka had a positive role, since it helped to ensure a consensus among the parties and prevented the concentration of power in the hands of one party, thus ensuring the stability of the political system[243]. However, an institution like the Petka was also clearly by-passing the powers of the elected parliament - which is problematic in a democracy. Moreover, the constitution of a circle of experts, politicians and intellectuals around the *Hrad* (Prague Castle, seat of the

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[241]Roman Szporluk writes that "One of the main lessons Masaryk sought to teach his nation was that force should be resisted with force ; he never said that it should rsists only a weaker opponent. We have seen that he was wont to invoke the name of Jan Zizka to remind the Czechs that in the past they had had leaders who fought against powerful enemies, and Masaryk was himself an embodiment of his teachings. What were his struggles against the Manuscript forgeries, his campaign in defense of Hilsner, his exposure of Austrian plots in the Balkans or finally his decision to fight Austria in 1914, if not lessons by example in political behavior ?"(*The Political Thought of Thomas G. Masaryk*; Boulder, East European Monographs; Columbia University Press; 1981; pp.165-166)

[242]For an extremely critical (and biased) view of the "legend" surrounding the First republic, see Kurt Glaser, *Czecho-Slovakia.*

[243]See Pavel Belina, Petr Cornej, and Jiří Pokorný (eds), *Histoire des Pays tchèques* (Paris; Editions du Seuil; 1995), p.371 ; Mamatey, "The Development", p.108; Seton-Watson, *A History,* pp.228-230; Edward Táborský, *Czechoslovak Democracy at Work* (London; George Allen & Unwin; 1945), p.105.

presidency) and under the moral authority of Masaryk and his successor Beneš could equally appear to be a sign of a certain disregard for the legitimately elected democratic institutions[244].

But one more disturbing aspect of Czech political culture was also characteristic of the First Czechoslovak republic: a *benign* cult of the leader was established around the person of the founder of Czechoslovakia, the "philosopher-king" Tomáš Masaryk. The interwar republic has often significantly been dubbed "Masaryk's republic" and the president-liberator was often called with affection *tatíček* (little father) or *starý pán* (the old gentleman)[245]. In fact, there appears at least in this respect to be a certain continuity between Masaryk and Havel: as Holy put it, "[t]he role of Havel in present-day Czech politics is analogous to Masaryk's"[246]. Havel has (like Masaryk had) only limited constitutional powers, but he benefited from a great popularity: he was perceived "not only 'as a liberator [from communism] and as a redeemer [from the compromissions of that time]', but also as the garant of democracy and the defender of civil society"[247]. This would tend to confirm that a certain tendency to "deify" the leader, what Vojtech Mastny (writing about the interwar years) defined as a *dictature du respect*[248], is an integral part of Czech political culture. A law introduced in 1961 stating that "those who defame the president for his performance in power or in political life are liable to receive up to two years in prison" was hence only amended in September 1997, nearly 8 years after the Velvet revolution, under the pressure of the European Union, Amnesty International and Havel himself[249].

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[244]cf for example Rupnik, *Histoire*, p.220-222 or Schöpflin, *Politics*, p.16 and 20-21. Masaryk himself had a somewhat Platonician and elitist view of democracy (see R.Szporluk, "Masaryk's Idea of Democracy", *Slavonic and East European Review*, vol.41, n°96, December 1962, pp.31-49)

[245]See for instance Hanus J. Hájek, *T.G. Masaryk Revisited: A Critical Assessment* (Boulder, East European Monographs; New York, Columbia University Press; 1983), p.20 and 165. Joseph F.Zacek goes as far as to see in Masaryk "a sort of democratic *führer*" ("Czechoslovak Fascism", in Peter F.Sugar, *Native Fascism in the Successor States 1918 1945*; Santa Barbara; ABC Clio; 1971; p.62, author's emphasis).

[246]Holy, *The Little*, p.167

[247]*Le Monde*, Thursday 22 January 1998

[248]Mastny, *The Czechs*, p.20

[249]*The Guardian*, 29 September 1997

Eventually, it would seem appropriate to adopt a more nuanced assessment of the degree of entrenchment of democratic values in Czech society between 1918 and 1938.

There was a not insignificant amount of censorship during the interwar years and a Law for the Defence of the Republic allowed the state to monitor public gatherings and to control the activity of anti-systemic political groups such as the Communists, the Slovak populists or the small Czech fascist movement led by Rudolf Gajda[250].

More importantly, the lack of resistance during the Nazi and communist "takeovers" of 1938 and 1948 has to a certain extent its origin in the internal weaknesses of the interwar democratic regime, and especially in Czech chauvinism. Despite the promises of Beneš at the Versailles Conference to make from Czechoslovakia another Switzerland[251], the de facto ineluctably multinational state was, as shown in chapter 1, clearly established as a Czech state. The Czech political elite which was dominant in the institutions of the new state (often for logical reasons, as we saw), clearly did not give enough consideration to the sometimes legitimate claims of the national minorities (German and Hungarian especially) and of their "junior partners", the Slovaks. Adopting a more "civil" conception of the state and politically "generous" attitudes, as advocated by intellectuals such as Emanuel Rádl or Jan Patočka[252], would arguably have contributed to reinforce the democratic traditions of Czech political culture and helped to eliminate (or at least alleviate) the fundamental contradiction between the realisation of the Czech national ideal and the belief in the universal democratic and humanist "mission" of the Czechs[253].

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[250]See for instance Andrew T.Green and Carol Skalnik Leff, "The quality of democracy: mass-elite linkages in the Czech Republic", *Democratization*, vol.4, n°4, Winter 1997, p.66. The work of D.El'Mallakh (*The Slovak*) for example draws extensively on police reports of meetings of the Slovak's people's Party. For a discussion of the Czech fascist movement in the interwar period, see David D. Kelly, *The Czech Fascist Movement, 1922-1942* (Boulder, New York; East European Monographs; 1995); Jan Havránek, "Fascism in Czechoslovakia", in Sugar, *Native Fascism*, pp. 49-51

[251]Hájek,*TG Masaryk*, pp.25-27

[252]See Patočka, *L 'Idée*; E. Rádl is the writer of the influential *Válka Čechů s Nemci* (The War of the Czechs with the Germans, Prague, 1928). In the nineteenth century, the name of the mathematician Bernard Bolzano (1781-1848) figures predominantly among the advocates of a civic and territorial Bohemian nationalism (*Landespatriotismus*) - as opposed to a divisive ethnic nationalism, bound to lead to conflicts between Czechs and Germans. Cf Jaromír Loužil, "La lutte pour la 'nation' tchèque entre la pensée des Lumières et le nationalisme romantique: Bernard Bolzano", in Delsol and Maslowski, *Histoire*, pp.296-309 and Derek Sayer, *The Coasts of Bohemia: A Czech History* (Princeton; Princeton University Press; 1998), pp.57-62.

[253]See for instance F.Gregory Campbell , "Empty Pedestals ?", *Slavic Review*, vol.44, n°1, Spring 1985, p.12 ; Olivier Cauly, "De l'Idéal démocratique et humanitaire des Tchèques", *Cahiers d'Europe*, Printemps-Eté 1997,

However, the myth of the First republic is not the only one to be in need of a relativisation, and the widespread idea that "there is no Czech nationalism" also has to be refuted. The impact of Czech nationalism on the break-up of 1992 will be discussed in detail in chapter 6, but several important points should probably be raised at this stage already.

To start with, after World War II, the decision to expel the German minority of Czechoslovakia was an expression of Czech nationalism and a settlement based on the dubious application of the principle of "collective guilt". Interestingly, in spite of the apologies of Václav Havel to the German government in 1990, in 1993 70 percent of the Czechs still considered the "transfer" (*odsun*) of the Sudeten Germans legitimate[254].

Similarly, and more recently, the post-communist era has unfortunately been marked by several manifestations of a revival of Czech nationalism: it was demonstrated for example by the electoral successes of the ultra-right wing Republican party led by Miroslav Sládek, which polled 6 % of the votes during the 1992 elections at the House of Deputies and 8 % in 1996[255]. The Republican party was in fact the only Czech party explicitly hostile to the break-up of Czechoslovakia and still calling for the "reunification" of the country: the party even threatened to open in September 1992 criminal proceedings for treason against Václav Kaus for his role in the division of the state[256]. One of the recurrent themes developed by the Republicans is the fear of Germany and of a German economic "takeover": in fact, during Havel's re-election at the presidency in January 1998, Sládek was in preventive detention awaiting trial for "incitation at racial hatred" following his declarations one year before, during a demonstration against the signature of a Czech-German reconciliation treaty[257].

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n°2, pp.117-118. More generally, H. Gordon Skilling shows for instance how Masaryk attempted to reconcile the idea of humanity *(idea humanitní)* and the idea of nationality (*idea národnostní*) (*T.G Masaryk*, p.148).

[254]Lidové Noviny, 10 August 1993 (quoted in Holy, *The Little*, p.124)

[255]see also Paul Hockenos, *Free to Hate: The Rise of the right in Post-communist Eastern Europe* (New York; Routledge; 1993) , pp.209-236 ; Thomas S.Szayna, "Ultra nationalism in Eastern Europe",*Orbis*, vol.37, n°4, Fall 1993, pp.539-542

[256]Thomas S.Szayna, "The extreme-right political movements in post-communist Central Europe", in Peter H.Merkl and Leonard Weinberg (eds), *The revival of right-wing extremism in the nineties* (London, Portland; Frank Cass; 1997), pp.123-128

[257]*Le Monde*, Vendredi 30 Janvier 1998

Another example is the emergence of an anti-Gypsy racism, which triggered in the summer 1997 -following the diffusions on Czech television of two documentaries about the life of Gypsies in Canada and the United Kingdom - a wave of emigration among the estimated 200 to 300000 Czech Romanies. Racial "discrimination is neither open or legal: it is hidden and relies on the intolerance and the xenophobia of great part of the population". Public opinion polls for example showed that 69% of the Czechs declared that they had a "negative reaction towards the Roms" and 87% did not want them as neighbours[258].

More generally, in two surveys realised in 1990 and 1992 in the Czech republic, respondents mentioned the adjective "envious" as the most distinctive trait of the national character (12 % in 1990, but 28 % in 1992 !)[259]. This is not in itself significant, but Czech society appears to be permeated with a rather negative form of egalitarianism, which tends to express itself, especially in the post-communist era, in the form of jealousy towards talented or successful people. M. Smetana observes, in a passage worth quoting at length that:

> A hero in Bohemia faces many more difficulties than anywehere else because he is confronted - sooner or later- with malicious petty-mindedness and envy. With us, this envy is the obverse ...of popularity. A proud, sincere and truthful person is a thorn in the side of the people of Bohemia, whether he is a politician, an entrepreneur, or an artist. Since times immemorial, democracy with us has degenerated into a kind of egalitarianism which is intolerant of authority, rejects responsability, and dissolves everything with doubts and slander, as if our people did not believe that greatness is indeed greatness, noble-mindedness is noble-mindedness, and truth is truth...[260]

There is perhaps thus a downside to Czech "democratic" egalitarianism. It has controversially be argued that the near absence of a native cosmopolitan aristocracy led in the nineteenth century, to a relative "mediocrity" and nationally-oriented narrow-mindedness in Czech intellectual and cultural life - to an extent illustrated in music by the cult status achieved in

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[258] *Le Monde*, 28 October 1997 ; *The Guardian* (14, 20, 23 August and 20 November 1997)

[259] Holy, *The Little*, p.75-76

[260] M.Smetana, *Dve kariéry Jana Třisky*, (1991, Prague, Interpress, p.97) quoted by Holy, *ibid.*, p.74. See also, on a satirical and humorous note, Benjamin Kuras, *Czechs and Balances: a Nation's Survival Kit* (Prague; Baronet; 1998), pp.16-17.

Bohemia by Bedřich Smetana's "national" compositions, as opposed to the more "universal" themes and inspiration of Antonín Dvořák's works.

More specifically, Jan Patočka contended in his influential essay *Co Jsou Češi* ? (written in German in 1975) that the incomplete societal structure of Czech society had prevented the emergence of the resolute decision-makers and "action men" that the Czechs would have needed to meet the challenges of their troubled recent history[261] . This failure to nurture "exceptional" statesmen (Masaryk once famously denounced the inability of his fellow politicians to be "lions" rather than "foxes")[262] had therefore very concrete and practical consequences, most evident perhaps in the conduct of interwar Czechoslovak foreign policy and its ultimate failure at Munich: "since the country possessed no hereditary aristocracy with a 'corner' on diplomatic assignments, Czechoslovakia's career diplomats were essentially run-of-the-mill civil servants with limited responsabilities and corresponding abilities"[263].

For all these reasons, as the historian and one time Czech prime minister (from January 1990 to June 1992) Petr Pithart rightly put it, "the street of the little Czech man has never been far removed from xenophobia, vile hatred, petty selfishness and cowardly antisemitism"[264], even in some influential figures traditionally considered as "democratic" role models such as the influential journalist of the interwar period Ferdinand Peroutka[265].

Czech democratic tradition is hence far from being flawless and marked by continuity. The claim of the Czechs to have a democratic tradition unique in Central and Eastern Europe

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[261] even if he concedes that Masaryk was "an exception to the rule" (Jan Patočka, "Qu'est-ce que les Tchèques ?", in *L'Idée*, pp.18-19 and 103). In another essay, The Philosophy of Czech history, Patočka laments the absence of grand-style conservatism in Czech society ("La Philosophie de l'Histoire Tchèque", in *ibid.*, p.131). Aviezer Tucker sheds light on the ambiguous and inconsistent nature of Patočka's conception of democracy and, while signalling the philosopher as "a great anti-nationalist democrat", he also aptly argues that his elitism is "distintly anti-democratic" (Aviezer Tucker, "Shipwrecked: Patočka's Philosophy of Czech History", *History and Theory*, vol.35, 1996, p.208).

[262] in *Česká Otázka* ("The Czech Question", 1895), quoted in H.Gordon Skilling, "Lions or Foxes: Heroes or Lackeys ?", in Gordon Skilling (ed.), *Czechoslovakia 1918-88*, p.3.

[263] Paul Zinner, "Czechoslovakia: the Diplomacy of Eduard Beneš", in Gordon A. Craig and Felix Gilbert (eds), *The Diplomats* (Princeton; Princeton University Press; 1953), p.106.

[264] quoted in Michel, *Nations*, p.265

[265] See Eva Schmidt-Hartmann, "The Enlightenment That Failed: Antisemitism in Czech Political Culture", *Patterns of Prejudice*, vol.27, n°2, 1993, pp.119-128

appears questionable: the Czechs lived from 1939 to 1945 and from 1948 to 1989 under authoritarian regimes and the average Czech had before 1989 spent most of his life without any concrete experience of democracy (except during the Prague Spring of 1968 ?[266]). The democratic tradition survived mainly through vague memories, but more often mere hearsay about the "good old times" of Masaryk's republic - itself far from being a perfect model of democracy.

Hence Slovak political culture is not characterised only by "authoritarian" tendencies and Czech democratic tradition also includes certain ambiguous elements. We now turn to prove that the differences between Czechs and Slovaks cannot account for the break-up of the Czechoslovak state in 1992.

Contrasting Czech and Slovak political cultures in a vacuum is reductionist and the extension of our comparative approach to other East European countries would show that, if it is fair to say that Slovaks seem less "democratically-oriented" than Czechs, they however compare fairly well and sometimes extremely favourably with Hungarians and especially Poles. Three common quantitative indicators could be used to vindicate this point.

First, 8 % of the Czechs favoured a single-party system in 1992 but the Slovaks (14 %) were more supportive of pluralism than the Hungarians (22%) and the Poles (31%).

Table 2.2 : Preference for a single-party system in East-central European states

Preference for a single party system (in %)	1991	1992	1993	1994
Czech Republic	6	8	8	6
Slovakia	14	14	16	20
Hungary	18	22	-	22
Poland	19	31	-	23

Source: Fritz Plasser and Andreas Pribersky (eds), *Political culture in East Central Europe* (Aldershot; Brookfield; Avebury; 1996), p.22

[266]The Prague spring was indeed an experience of democratisation more than an experience of democracy (and one could perhaps go as far as to see this ambiguity as a parallel to the case of the First republic – see above)

Second, the Slovaks tended to be more confident than the Hungarians and the Poles as to their capacity of influencing the governement (22 % compared with 10 and 8 % respectively).

Table 2.3

Sense of political efficacy ("people like me have no influence on government")

country	percent disagreeing
USA (1988)	58
Switzerland (1991)	46
Australia (1987)	42
Netherlands (1988)	38
Germany (1989)	32
Austria (1989)	24
Czech Republic (1993)	23
Slovakia (1993)	22
Hungary (1992)	10
Poland (1992)	8

Source: Plasser and Pribersky, *Political culture*, p.237

Finally, and perhaps even more significantly, the Slovaks appeared more reluctant than the Hungarians, the Poles and even the Czechs, to believe in the necessity of a "strong man" (19 % compared to 26, 36 and 22 %).

Table 2.4: Authoritarian tendencies in East-Central European states

% agreeing	"The country needs a strong man"	"Would welcome dissolution of parliament and abolition of parties"
Austria	22	8
Czech Republic	22	19
Slovakia	19	20
Hungary	26	24
Poland	36	40

Source: Plasser and Pribersky, *Political culture*, p.238

Slovak political culture seems representative of what could be defined as a Central European political culture and clearly has some common points with the political traditions of its Hungarian and Polish neighbours: Slovaks would even tend to appear slightly more ready to support democracy.

If anything, rather than talking about a Slovak exceptionalism, one should probably talk about "Czech exceptionalism": the support of the Czechs for economic reforms and market economy (see table 2.1 and chapter 3) and for political pluralism (table 2.2) suggests that the Czechs were rather atypical in the Central European and post-communist context. The two successor states of Czechoslovakia have an European destiny, even if less "manifest" as far as Slovakia is concerned, largely because of the undemocratic tendencies of its long-serving prime minister Vladimír Mečiar.

But the concept of "political culture" itself is not as "static" or predetermined as previously assumed and a viable analysis must allow for the possibility of changes or evolutions in the political culture of a country.

In the case of the former Czechoslovakia and contrarily to the generally accepted vision of the split as having been caused by the increasingly irreconcilable divergences between Czechs and Slovaks, it is possible to witness a process of "convergence" of Czech and Slovak political behaviours.

Nearly eight years after the division of Czechoslovakia, the Czech and Slovak paths to transition are starting to draw nearer again. The muddy end of the Czech economic 'miracle' (and of Václav Klaus's government in 1997) and the nearly simultaneous defeat of Vladimír Mečiar in September 1998 seem to have reversed the trends of 1989-1992. The initial (over?)confidence of the Czechs has evaporated after the emergence of economic difficulties and has been replaced by a widespread pessimism, whereas Slovakia is now striving to make up for the time lost under Mečiar 's rule[267].

Conclusion

There are many aspects which differentiate Czechs and Slovaks in term of their political cultures and traditions, but they are however closely related. To go back to the quotation in exerguis, Czech-Slovak relations were characterised by what Freud called 'the narcissism of minor differences'[268].

'[N]ational identity, like all other identities, is always constructed in opposition to those perceived as the Other'[269]: the Czechs had before 1918 defined their identity in opposition to the Germans and under the communist regime (especially after August 1968) they conceived their identity as contrary to the 'Soviet' system. Similarly, the Slovaks had before the foundation of the Czechoslovak state defined themselves in comparison with the Hungarians. After the shock of 1989, Czechs and Slovaks were however left facing each other in a binational state[270] and were led to assert their respective identities in contrast to the identity of the other nation of the state.

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[267]See for example Jacques Rupnik, 'Un Bilan du Divorce Tchéco-slovaque: Transition démocratique et construction d'Etats-nations', *Critique Internationale*, n°2, Winter 1999, pp. 91-115

[268]The reference to Freud's 'narcissism of minor differences' comes from Ignatieff, *The Warrior's*, 1999, p. 34-71

[269]Holy, *The Little*, p. 5

[270]The most numerous minority was the Hungarian community which constituted only 3.8 percent of the Czechoslovak population in 1991 (even if 11 percent of Slovakia's population).

This process appears to be a constant in the political life of multiethnic states. The example of the United Kingdom- where the Scots (and the Welsh) are more and more assertive of their identity and cultural heritage as distinct from the English -comes as a confirmation of this phenomenon. Does this mean that Czechs and Slovaks could not go on coexisting and would not have found an advantage in the maintenance of their common state ?. Our tentative answer to this question is no: after all, English and Scots, Wallons and Flemish, but also Prussians and Bavarians are different, but they still live together, even if an interethnic consensus is sometimes difficult to achieve in the case of the United Kingdom and Belgium.

Any attempt to explain the break-up of Czechoslovakia cannot underestimate the fundamental role played by *perceptions* in the process that led to the velvet divorce of the Czech and Slovak nations, and there is arguably a good deal of moderate or mild 'orientalism' in both the perception of Slovak political culture as inherently undemocratic and the related (opposite) idealisation of Czech democratic traditions[271]. Through a sociological process which became a widespread political strategy in the post Cold War era[272], Czech leaders such as Václav Klaus or Václav Benda were able to present the Slovaks as their constituting 'Eastern' others in order to emphasize the Czechs' alleged Westernity and appartenance to the West.
In other words, defining the Czech lands as 'West' and Slovakia as 'East' is not only an inaccurate description based on only partial evidence. It does not either provide us with a viable explanation of the break-up.

The 'political-cultural' argument furthermore faces at least two additional caveats.
The non-violence of the dissolution of Czechoslovakia tentatively demonstrates in its own right, especially if compared with the cases of Yugoslavia or the former Soviet Union, that

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[271]Even if, contrary to Adam Burgess (*Divided Europe: The New Domination of the East*; London and Chicago; Pluto Press; 1997; pp. 47-48), I believe the isolation of Mečiar by the West was justified by the authoritarian nature of his regime. The concept of 'orientalism' has of course originally been developed by Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (London; Routledge and Kegan Paul; 1978), and has been recently applied to Eastern Europe by Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment* (Stanford; Standford University Press; 1994).

[272]See for instance Iver B. Neumann, *Uses of the Other: 'the East' in European Identity Formation* (Manchester; Manchester University Press; 1999).

Czechs and Slovaks, despite of their undeniable differences, share a certain, if far from perfect, democratic tradition, which led them to avoid violence and to a 'velvet divorce'[273]. Finally, and much more importantly, the next chapter discusses why the 'statistical' divergences between Czechs and Slovaks should not be uniformly interpreted as evidence of deep-rooted (historical) political-cultural differences between the two nations - but rather as a normal and rational consequence of the divergent 'actual' economic experiences of the Czech lands and Slovakia between 1989 and 1992[274].

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[273]even if Samuel Huntington would undoubtedly argue -thereby, indirectly and implicitly vindicating our point- that the breakup of Czechoslovakia was non-violent, because there was (is) no civilizational faultline between the 'Western' Czechs and Slovaks (*The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, London and New York; Touchstone Books; 1998; p. 37)

[274]This point is convincingly made by Stephen Whitefield and Geoffrey Evans ('Political Culture Versus Rational Choice: Explaining Responses to Transition in the Czech Republic and Slovakia', *British Journal of Political Science*, vol.29, Part 1, January 1999, pp. 129-155)

CHAPTER 3
THE ECONOMICS OF THE CZECHO-SLOVAK DIVORCE

After having demonstrated in the previous chapter that the differences between Czech and Slovak political cultures cannot account for the break-up of Czechoslovakia, we now turn to the second "foundational" problem that has been deemed to suggest the inevitability of the division of the state: the long-term and continuing economic divergences between the Western (Czech) and the Eastern (Slovak) halves of the country.

The Czech and Slovak conflict translated in economic terms and economic issues became quickly "ethnicised" in the post-communist era. The wider debate about the desirable strategy of economic transformation tended to take in Czechoslovakia the form of a "national" (Czech versus Slovak) divide.

The idea of a rapid transition through a series of bold and speedy structural reforms ("shock therapy" or "big bang") gained the upper hand among Czech decision-makers and - as we saw in the previous chapter - among Czech public opinion. The Slovaks were however considerably more reluctant and pleaded for a softer approach to economic transition (so-called "gradualism"), taking into account what was held to be the "specificity" of the poorer and less developed Slovak economy and society[275]. The formal adhesion of the federal centre to a policy of shock therapy (especially under the auspices of the finance minister Václav Klaus) was therefore bound to meet with strong opposition in Slovakia.

This clash of economic and social perspectives inevitably had consequences for the integrity of the country, and the creation of two independent states in January 1993 has commonly been explained on economic grounds[276].

The orientations and priorities of the Czechs and Slovaks were held to be incompatible and appeared to have become definitively irreconcilable after the parliamentary elections of June 1992, when the Czechs massively voted for the free-marketeer, disciple of Milton Friedman

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[275]Drawbacks of this generalisation are presented below in this chapter.

[276]See Introduction, footnote n°3

and Margaret Thatcher, Václav Klaus, whereas the Slovaks backed the "gradualist" rhetoric of Vladimír Mečiar [277].

This chapter argues that economic factors were in no way instrumental in the break-up of Czechoslovakia. In order to prove this point, the "economic paradox" of the Czechoslovak state -the (largely successful) commitment of the communist regime to a policy of equalisation of the Czech and Slovak parts of the country- is considered.
The following section examines the economically-based (and often more or less explicitly "secessionist") arguments developed by leading Czech and Slovak politicians such as Klaus and Mečiar, before attempting to demonstrate that the economic case for a divorce was in many respects extremely tenuous.
It will subsequently be contended that the use of a simplistic economic rhetoric which would tend to perceive the "Other" nation as unambiguously responsible for one's economic hardships, was inevitable in the context of the transition from a planned to a market economy in Czechoslovakia. Economic considerations appeared at best secondary in the break-up of Czechoslovakia and, if only in this specific case, separatism was only loosely linked with the notion of material interest.
Popular *perceptions* of relative economic deprivation, exploited by both Czech and Slovak politicians, were more significant than "really existing" economic conditions, and the splitting up of the state could therefore be more valuably explained by political determinants.

The "economic paradox" of the break-up of Czechoslovakia: the success of the economic equalisation undertaken during the communist regime

When considering the economic aspects of the division of Czechoslovakia, one is immediately forced to look at a rather confounding fact, what could be called the "economic paradox" of the break-up: the division of the state in 1993 occurred at a time when, at least on paper (if not psychologically), Czechs and Slovaks had probably never been so close to each other in economic and sociological terms.

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[277] See chapter 2.

As seen in chapter 1, at the creation of the Czechoslovak state in 1918 and during the interwar period, the gap between the Czech western half and the eastern half (Slovakia, but also, until 1945, Subcarpathian Ruthenia) of the country was extremely important. The Slovak economy was characterised by its reliance on a primary sector, which employed as much as 60.6 % of the population according to the census data of 1921 - in sharp contrast with the corresponding figure of only 31.6 % in the Czech lands (Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia)[278].
What is more, during the two decades of the First Republic, the economic development of Slovakia does not appear to have been significant, and the gap with the Czech area in certain respects actually increased. For example, the share of the Slovak industrial production in the total industrial production of the state declined from 8 % to 7.8 % between 1921 and 1937. Similarly, the Slovak contribution to the national income fell from 18.2 to 12 percent during the same period[279].

The Great Depression had a significant and lasting impact on the Slovak economy. As table 3.1 shows, Slovak economic indicators all considerably fell between 1929 and 1933, even if the most industrialised and export-oriented Czech lands were hit even harder in relative terms than the still predominantly rural Slovakia[280]. However, in absolute terms, given the low starting point of the Slovak economy, the conditions in the eastern half of the state became nothing less than precarious, with about one-third of the Slovak population driven out of the job market without a steady income[281].

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[278]Jaroslav Krejčí and Pavel Machonin, *Czechoslovakia, 1918-1992: A laboratory for social change* (Basingstoke and London; Macmillan; 1996), p.58

[279]Figures in Wehrlé, *Le divorce*, p.173

[280]Most significantly, it has been estimated that around two thirds of the 920 000 unemployed in Czechoslovakia during the depression were German (Frank Hadler, "Böhmen und Mähren im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert", in Bahlcke, Eberhard and Polívka, *Böhmen,* p.CXXXIV). The Sudeten Germans, traditionally reliant on export industries, suffered extensive losses after the rise of new protectionist trade barriers.

[281]Mamatey, "The Development", p.143; Fellak, *"At the Price*, p.83.

Table 3.1: Selected economic indicators - Eastern half of Czechoslovakia 1913-1937 (Ruthenia included) - 1913 (indice 100)

	1913	1924	1929	1933	1937
Inhabitants	100	101.1	104.8	107.6	109.4
Industry	100	100	125.0	75.8	120.4
Coal	100	95.7	105.1	68.8	93.1
Textile	100	76.6	92.6	56.1	82.2
Agriculture	100	100 (1925)	101.8	99.9	111.3
Exports	100	84.3	110.2	44.1	78.5

Source: Jan Vachel, "Fakta o vztazích české a slovenské ekonomiky", *Hospodářské noviny*, 24 April 1991, p.4, quoted in Wehrlé, *Le Divorce Tchéco-slovaque*, p.173

The incapacity of the interwar regime to ensure the economic development of Slovakia had nevertheless deeper roots.

The nationalists of Hlinka Slovak's People Party (SPP) argued that Slovakia's continuing backwardness was due to its peripheral position in the economy of the state and the exploitation by the Czechs of its potential. According to this theory, if Slovakia was underdeveloped, it was largely because of its status as a "Czech colony"[282]. The Czech administrators, teachers and specialised workers who had been (by necessity and at the request of prominent Slovak leaders[283]) brought to the province after the war quickly became the objects of the resentment of the new and fast-growing Slovak elites. Tiso (then the SPP's deputy chairman) condemned in May 1933 the "colonial policy...which has for objective the open economic and social downfall [of Slovakia]"[284].

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[282]An entry of the Czech Commercial Encyclopedia (*Ottův Ochodní slovník*) of 1927, stating that "Slovakia is going to be our colony" was for instance perceived as representative of Czech "imperialist" mindset (Ottův Obchodní slovník, Prague, 1927, vol.II, p.1217, quoted in Renée Perréal and Joseph A. Mikuš, *La Slovaquie: Une Nation au coeur de l'Europe;* Lausanne; Editions L'Age d'Homme; 1992, p.49.

[283]See chapter 1

[284]Zpráva, 30 May 1933, p.6, quoted in Stanislav Kirschbaum, "Die Stellung der slowakischen Volkspartei zur Aussenpolitik Prags", in Karl Bosl (ed.), *Gleichgewicht-Revision-Restauration: Die Aussenpolitik der Ersten Tschechoslowakischen Republik im Europasystem der Pariser Vorortevertäge* (Munich, Vienna; R.Oldenbourg; 1976), p.328.

Applying to Czechoslovakia the concept of "internal colonialism" would however fail to take into account and belittle the otherwise undeniable social, cultural, and political achievements of the first republic in Slovakia[285].

The main fault of the Czech-dominated first Czechoslovak republic was not its economic "exploitation" of Slovakia but its reluctance to implement an economic policy that would have actively promoted the development of Slovakia. The reliance of many Czech policy-makers on liberal economic principles negatively affected the less competitive Slovak economy, and, as noted earlier, the first plan for the economic modernisation and industrialisation of Slovakia was only published and made public in April 1937[286]- too little, too late to have significant results given the international political context.

Under the Slovak state between 1939 and 1945, the Slovak economy actually experienced a wartime industrial boom and the output of the manufacturing industry increased by 63 percent between 1937 and 1943[287]

The Slovak industry usually fared better than the Czech during the war, in terms of employment (+43 % versus +25 %), production (+56% versus +17%) and productivity (+9 % versus -6 %).

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[285] See Chapter 1. The model of internal colonialism has been most famously developed by Michael Hechter in his influential (and controversial) study of British economic development, *Internal Colonialism.*

[286] Václav Průcha, "Economic development and relations, 1918-89", in Musil, *The End,* pp.48-49. See also ch.1.

[287] *ibid.*, p.57

Table 3.2 : Performance of Czech and Slovak industry in 1943 (1939 = indice 100)

	Slovakia	Bohemia and Moravia
A. Industry as a whole		
Employment	143	125
Production	156	117
Productivity	109	94
B. Metallurgy and metal fabricating		
Employment	174	207
Production	176	173
Productivity	101	84

Source: Krejčí and Machonin, *Czechoslovakia 1918-1992*, p.72

When the communists took power in Czechoslovakia in 1948 in what was now (following the expulsion of the Sudeten Germans and the cession of Ruthenia to the Soviet Union) mostly a bi-national (Czech and Slovak) state[288], they adopted the Marxist-Leninist doctrine as far as nationalism was concerned. The communist regime intended to eradicate Slovak nationalism and to solve the Slovak question that had plagued its interwar predecessor through a programme of economic equalisation of the two parts of the state. This was in line with the theory according to which nationalism was a temporary and objective expression of identity linked to economic disparities and deprivation - and therefore with the belief that investing massively in Slovak economic development would automatically eliminate Slovak nationalism. In contrast to the "bourgeois" republic, the Czechoslovak socialist republic would become, thanks to its economic policies, a "class-social structure without exploiting classes, indicating that the Czech and Slovak nations have changed into communities of working people"[289] and that proletarian internationalism has replaced bourgeois nationalism.

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[288] See ch.9

[289] Juraj Zvara, "National development under the conditions of socialism" in Jacques Dofny and Akinsola Akiwowo (eds), *National and Ethnic Movements* (Beverly Hills, London; Sage; 1980), p.148.

The communist regime continuously encouraged a massive transfer of budgetary funds and subsidies from the Czech lands to Slovakia to ensure faster growth rates in the latter and thus actively promoted the "socialist industrialisation" of Slovakia.

Between 1949 and 1965 for instance, 30.8 % of Slovakia's capital investment budget came from the centre, more than its share of the country's population[290]. The region also had a constantly higher rate of investment than the Czech lands : "the investment allocated to Slovakia always exceeded its share of the produced national income" and the proportion of total investment directed towards Slovakia gradually increased "from 29.9 % in the 1950s to 34.4 % in 1989"[291]. Relatedly, the capital investment per worker in Slovakia was on average 22.6 % higher than in the Czech republic between 1950 and 1989 (table 3.3).

Table 3.3

Capital investment per worker of the national economy in the Czech Republic and Slovak Republic in market prices (in Czechoslovak Koruna)

Period	Czech Republic	Slovakia	Czech Republic . (Slovakia =100)	Slovakia (Czech Republic = 100)
1951-60	48,059	55,228	87,0	114,9
1961-70	85,351	111,632	76,5	130,8
1971-80	177,232	212,836	83,3	120,1
1981-88	166,247	185,467	89,6	111,6

Source: A. Bálek, Vývoj postavení Českých zemí v Československu, *České perspektivy*, 2, 1990 (quoted in Pavlínek, "Regional Development", p.357)

In April 1985, on the 40th anniversary of the Košice Programme which marked the liberation and the "reunification" of the country after World War II, prime minister Lubomír Štrougal

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[290]Milica Zarkovic Bookman, "Economic Issues Underlying Secession: the Case of Slovenia and Slovakia", *Communist Economies and Economic Transformation*, vol.4, n°1, 1992, p.124.

[291]Pavlínek, "Regional", p.356. See also for instance Čapek and Sazama, "Czech", p.216 and Adrian Smith, "From Convergence to Fragmentation: Uneven Regional Development, Industrial Restructuring, and the 'transition to capitalism' in Slovakia", *Environment and Planning*, vol.28, n°1, 1996, pp.140-141.

proudly announced that the "process of equalisation of the two republics had reached its target"[292]. The following year, Slovakia's share of national production was triumphantly declared by the communist regime to be proportional to its population in 1986[293].

The statistics clearly confirm that an economic equalisation had taken place between 1948 and 1989: for example, the national income by inhabitant in Slovakia reached in 1989 85.7 percent of the level of the Czech Lands (only 61.2 % in 1948). Similarly, the share of Slovakia in the national income of Czechoslovakia was 30.9 % in 1989 (for a share of the population of 33.7 %) - it is instructive to compare this figure with the share of Slovakia in 1948 (only 19.2 % for a share of the population of 29.7 %). Finally, the average monthly wages in Slovakia in 1989 was 98.5 % of the Czech average wage (here again, a marked improvement if we consider the 91.6 % of 1948).[294] The figures presented in the table below equally illustrate and sum up the significance of the Slovak catching-up.

Table 3.4: The process of economic equalisation

Contribution of Slovakia	1948	1960	1970	1980	1989
Population (%)	27.9	29.3	31.6	32.6	33.7
National income created (%)	19.2	23.5	25.0	29.2	31.8
Gross agricultural product (%)	29.3	31.3	31.9	32.3	32.6
Gross industrial product (%)	13.0	18.6	22.7	28.9	30.5

Source: Statistics of the Czechoslovak state, quoted in Wehrlé, *Le Divorce*, p.219

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[292]Prucha, "Economic", p.73. The president Gustáv Husák contended in May 1981 that "*the historically rooted distinctions between the levels of economic, social and cultural development* of the various regions have been overcome, and relations of equality, brotherhood and solid unity between the Czechs and Slovaks ...were established" (Gustáv Husák, *Speeches and Writings*; Oxford, New York; Pergamon Press; 1986; p.121, emphasis added).

[293]Rudé Právo (17 March 1986) quoted by Carol Skalnik Leff, "Czech and Slovak nationalism in the twentieth century" in Peter Sugar (ed.), *Eastern European nationalism in the 20th century* (Washington DC; American University Press; 1995), p.157.

[294]Figures in Prucha, "Economic", p.62.

According to certain indicators, Slovakia even performed better than the Czech lands. Partly because of the regime's ideological emphasis on training new cadres[295], Slovakia had by 1989 proportionally more secondary school and university graduates than the Czech Republic[296].

Table 3.5
Czech Lands = 100

	1950	1960	1970	1980	1989
Secondary school graduates (per 1000 inhabitants)	0.60	0.88	1.02	1.11	1.14
University graduates (per 1000 inhabitants)	0.58	0.84	0.96	1.10	1.16

Source: Czechoslovak statistical yearbooks, quoted in Dedek (ed.), *The break-up of Czechoslovakia*, p.23

To be fair, the catching-up had some superficial aspects and Slovakia was still lagging behind in significant indicators of social development such as the number of telephones per 1,000 inhabitants (257 against 314 in the Czech lands), the ownership of television sets (241 against 309) or the infant mortality (2.7 °/°° higher than in the Czech Republic).

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[295]For an early policy statement by two Marxist economists, see Pavol Turcan and Viktor Pavlenda, *Le Développement Economique de la Slovaquie au sein de la Tchécoslovaquie Socialiste* (Bratislava; Editions de l'Académie slovaque des sciences; 1963), p.200.

[296]See also Kaiser, *National Territoriality*, p.217.

Table 3.6

1992	Czech Republic	Slovakia
Population	10.3	5.3
GDP $bn	25.3	10.2
GDP $ per person	2,440	1,920
Telephones per 1,000 pop.	314	257
Televisions	309	241
Infant mortality per 1,000 births	9.9	12.6

Source: *The Economist*, 1994, 12-18/11, p.41

Despite this, the success of the process of economic and social equalisation undertaken by the communist regime remains striking. The "process of the Slovak economic catching-up with the Czech Lands was a world unique phenomenon. Neither Italy with its regional policies to support the underdeveloped south, nor Britain attempting to promote its northern parts have managed to reach similar results"[297].

However, regardless of this concrete evidence of the success of the economic equalisation between the Czechs and the Slovaks, after the fall of the communist regime in 1989, both Czech and Slovak politicians resorted to economic arguments to advocate the break-up of the state.

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[297]Dedek, *The break-up*, p.26; see also Jiří Musil, "Czech and Slovak Society", *Government and Opposition*, vol.28, n°4, Fall 1993, p.483: "The swiftness of such 'levelling' between both parts of the state is, in the modern history of Europe, something of quite special significance". This appears even more impressive in contrast to the situation observed in the two other communist federations - i.e the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia. It should for instance be recalled here that in Yugoslavia, in the late 80s national income per capita was seven times higher in Slovenia, the richest republic of the federation, than in Kosovo. Moreover, in Yugoslavia, the position of the poorest republics actually worsened over the four decades of communism. Czechoslovakia was also a relatively integrated federation, another major difference with Yugoslavia, where the richest Slovenian and Croation republics had for a long time started to reorient their trade towards the West and to pursue economic policies according to what was considered to be their "national" interest (see Musil, *the End,* p.69, Vesna Bojicic, "The Disintegration of Yugoslavia: Causes and Consequences of Dynamic Inefficiency in semi-command economies" in David Dyker and Ivan Vejvoda, *Yugoslovia and after: a study in fragmentation, despair and rebirth* (London; Longman; 1996), p.40-44, and Sabrina P.Ramet, *Nationalism and federalism in Yugoslavia: 1962-1992* (Bloomington, Indianapolis; Indiana University Press; 2nd edition,1992), p.136-161).

The next section turns to an examination of the respective claims of the Slovaks and the Czechs, before trying in a following section to demonstrate the deep ambiguity of any economically-based (Slovak or Czech) plea for the division of Czechoslovakia.

The Slovak arguments: was there a Slovak economic "specificity" ?

Soon after the fall of the communist regime, Slovak leaders such as Vladimír Mečiar or economic think-tanks such as the Independent Association of Slovak Economists (NEZES) started to contend that the rapid economic transition to a market economy engaged under the management of the federal centre (and outlined in the "Scenario for Economic Reform" in 1990[298]) should be slowed down to take into account the so-called "specificities" -or "special circumstances"- of Slovak society. In a characteristic statement, NEZES for example argued in March 1991 that

> the big experiment, the so-called radical economic reform, is fast approaching the limits of what can be borne. The Czechoslovak economy is in danger of collapsing...The destructive economic consequences of the current course of reform reveal the failure and the antisocial character of the concept. A reform that permits experimenting with the economy and the costs of an incompetent transformation to be borne by the population is undemocratic... It is high time to subject the reform to fundamental corrections[299].

By September, the message had become even clearer:

> we will not overcome our poverty as long as the economic policy of the Slovak Republic, including reform policy, is determined by the Federation[300].

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[298]The "Scenario for Economic Reform", founded on the necessity of "shock therapy", was largely the brainchild of Václav Klaus and started to be officially implemented on January 1, 1991.

[299]CTK, March 2, 1991 (quoted in Peter Martin, "Economic Reform and Slovakia", *Report on Eastern Europe*, RFE / RL research institute, vol.2, n°27, July 5, 1991, p.8)

[300]SWB, EE/1180 B/3, quoted in Paal Sigurd Hilde, "Slovak Nationalism and the Break-up of Czechoslovakia", *Europe-Asia Studies*, vol.51, n°4, June 1999, p.656.

Slovak grievances essentially focused on five specific issues.

Firstly, the industrialisation of Slovakia had mostly taken place during the communist regime and was based on Soviet economic principles. In practice, this meant that the economic, political and strategic interests of the Soviet Union and of the Soviet bloc as a whole, often predominated over the interests of Slovakia. Slovak development was concentrated in certain areas which proved to be the most vulnerable and affected by economic competition after 1989.

After the fall of communism, regions of mono-industries were unable to adapt to the changing economic environment. Adrian Smith has demonstrated that Slovak districts, which had undergone a process of (diversified) industrialisation before the second world war and the advent of communism in 1948 (such as Liptovsky Svätý Mikulaš) had been markedly more successful after the revolution of 1989 than areas later industrialised under the communist regime (such as Martin)[301].

The most significant illustration of this phenomenon is the armament and arms industry. This sector was traditionally a strong point of the Czechoslovak economy, amounting for around 5-6 percent of the total Czechoslovak industrial production and about one fifth of the country exports at the end of the 1980s.

However, the arms industry was severely affected by the economic transformation and since 60 percent of the industrial capability in this field was concentrated in Slovakia, the region was hit hard by the considerable decrease in production after 1989. The armaments production accounted for as much as 24 percent of the mechanical and electronic industry in Slovakia, compared with only 7 percent in the Czech republic[302]- that is to say between 5-6 percent of Slovak total industrial output, compared to less than 2 percent in the Czech lands[303]. Moreover, Slovakia was mainly specialised in heavy armament, which made

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[301]Adrian Smith, "Constructing Capitalism ?: Small and Medium Enterprises, Industrial Districts and Regional Policy in Slovakia", *European Urban and Regional Studies*, vol.4, n°1, January 1997, pp.55-56, 64.

[302]Lubomír Brokl and Zdenka Mansfeldova, "Zerfall der Tschechoslowakei- strukturelle Ursachen und Parteihandeln", in Dieter Seigert and Csilla Machos (eds), *Parteien in Osteuropa: Kontext und Akteure* (Opladen; Westdeutscher Verlag; 1995), p.139.

[303]Aleš Čapek, "The split of Czechoslovakia and the specific features of the Slovak economy", in J. Krovák, *Current economics and politics of (ex-)Czechoslovakia* (New York; Nova Science Publishers; 1994), p.56.

reconversion difficult[304]. As a result, the (at least initial) commitment of post-communist leaders (such as Havel and the foreign minister Jiří Dienstbier) to a "moral" approach to foreign policy[305] and the plan of the federal centre for the reconversion of the military-industrial complex were "widely resented and interpreted as an insidious plot to stab the Slovaks in the back. Allegedly, it was 'the greatest catastrophe that the Slovak people have had to endure since the Turkish invasion in the 17th century'"[306].

Secondly, Slovakia was relatively more dependent on foreign trade with the Soviet Union and the CMEA (Council for Mutual Economic Assistance) than the Czech Republic.
In 1989, the share of the communist bloc in Slovak imports was 72 percent (66 percent in the Czech republic), and it was as much as 73.5 percent (compared to 65.8 percent) for the imports destined to industrial production[307].
The collapse of the CMEA in 1991 provoked a dramatic decrease of Slovak exports to the former USSR. Data for 19 industries in 1991 show that the "share of decrease in sales to the former Soviet Union in [the] total drop [of exports] represented in the SR 8.27 percent and in the CR 5.65 percent even though in absolute terms the decrease in the case of the Czech lands was higher"[308]. Most strikingly, the Slovak industries of metallurgy (iron), machinery, woodworking and printing were significantly more affected than their Czech counterparts by the end of the Soviet connection.

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[304]Walter Goruppi, "La Slovacchia sulla via della separazione: alcuni aspetti politici ed economici", *Est-Ovest*, n°3 / 1992, ISDEE (Istituto di studi e documentazione sull' Europa comunitaria e l'Europa orientale), p.8

[305]See also Ch.4

[306]Ulc, "The bumpy road", p.24

[307]Dedek, *The Break-up*, p.55

[308]Čapek, "The Split", p.57

By 1992, Czech and Slovak foreign trade had been thoroughly and surprisingly rapidly reoriented towards Western Europe, but Slovakia still lagged behind the Czech republic[309]. Exports to the former USSR constituted only 9 percent of Czech foreign trade but 17 percent of Slovakia's. Similarly, imports from the former USSR amounted to 18 percent of the exchanges of the CR but accounted for 36 percent of Slovakia's trade flows.

Table 3.7

Orientation of Czech and Slovak foreign trade in 1992

Exports (in %)	Czech Republic	Slovak Republic
-to Eastern Europe	12	13
-to the former USSR	9	**17**
-to Western countries	**68**	54
Imports (in %)		
-from Eastern Europe	6	7
-from the former USSR	18	**36**
-from Western countries	**70**	51

Source: OECD, Economic studies, Czech republic and Slovak republic, Paris, 1994, quoted in Wehrlé, *Le Divorce*, p.98

Thirdly, many Slovak economists claimed that the Slovak industrial production was fundamentally flawed because often limited to the output of raw materials or semi-finished goods destined to be "finished" in the Czech Republic. This was perceived as an illustration of the continuing "exploitation" of the Slovak Republic, whose 56 percent of the industrial output was constituted of semi-finished goods consumed in the Czech lands (the equivalent figure for the Czech industrial output was only 21 percent)[310]. The dependence of Slovak economy on low added value sectors was thus bound to cause a painful restructuring after the reintroduction of market economy in the country.

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[309]Even if it could be argued that the Slovak economy could and can still benefit from its traditional commercial links with the former Soviet Union (see for instance Gérard Wild, "Une Croissance Prometteuse", *Politique Internationale*, n°78, hiver 1997-1998- special issue on Slovakia, pp.47-61).

[310]Dedek, *The Break-up*, p.55

Fourthly, another source of complaints for the Slovaks was the limited amount of foreign investment: in 1991, only 13 percent of the 640 millions dollars invested in the federation were destined to Slovakia, far less than the share of the Slovak population in the state[311].
This lack of interest of foreign investors was taken to demonstrate once more the "Pragocentrist" and Jacobin character of the Czechoslovak federation. Foreign businessmen or policy-makers were received in Prague but were given no incentive to make the trip to Bratislava.
After the break-up, Mečiar contended that the unequal distribution of foreign investment (which he perceived to be the consequence of a "deliberate policy of discrimination") was one of the decisive factors that led to the end of the common state[312]. Slovakia, it was argued, should have been made more "visible" on the international scene, and the Czech-led federal centre did not do enough to promote the economic attractivity of the region.
Geography itself, in sharp contrast with the cold war era, where Slovakia's proximity to the Soviet Union was perceived as a strategic and economic advantage, seemed to have doomed Slovakia to a secondary position: whereas the Czech lands have a large network of communications with the - especially German-speaking and economically affluent - West, the only Western country with which Slovakia shares a (small) border is Austria[313].

Finally, and as a somewhat logical consequence of all these factors, Slovakia was much harder hit than the Czech Republic by unemployment. As shown by the table below, Slovak unemployment rates were usually three or four times higher than in the Czech lands.

311"Divorce à la tchécoslovaque", in *Conjonture* (Journal of the bank Paribas), October 1992, p.132.

312*Lidové Noviny*, 8 March 1993, p.16 (quoted in Pavlínek, "Regional", p.366)

313Jeffrey Simon, "Czechoslovakia's 'Velvet Divorce', Visegrad cohesion, and European faultlines", European Security, vol.3, n°3, Autumn 1994, pp.483-484. See more on that in chapter 4. Significantly, this geographic position allowed Czech workers to find work in Germany (Karel Dyba and Jan Svejnar, "A Comparative View of Economic Developments in the Czech Republic", in Jan Svejnar (ed.), *The Czech Republic and Economic Transition in Eastern Europe* (San Diego, New York; Academic Press; 1995), p.39; Jaroslav Blaha, "L'economie tchèque en 1995-1996: une croissance modèle", *Le Courrier des pays de l'Est*, n°409, mai-juin 1996, p.41). The former prime minister of the Czech Republic, Petr Pithart, even contended in October 1992 that "[i]f there were no Bavaria just across the border these regions of Bohemia would have an unemployment rate comparable to the worst regions of Slovakia" (Lecture at the Institute for Foreign Relations, Prague, 20 October 1992, quoted in Jan Urban, "The Czech and Slovak republics: Security Consequences of the Breakup of the CSFR", in Regina Cowen Karp (ed.), *Central and Eastern Europe: The Challenge of Transition*; Oxford, Oxford University Press, SIPRI; 1993; p.113).

Table 3.8

Unemployment rate	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
Czechoslovakia	1.7	6.6	5.5	-	-	-
Czech Republic	1.1	4.4	2.6	3.5	3.5	2.9
Slovakia	2.4	11.8	10.4	14.0	14.3	13.1

Source: Carol Skalnik Leff, *The Czech and Slovak Republic*, p.183

This indicator is clearly the most relevant, because a high unemployment rate has a concrete and visible effect on the attitudes of the population. It was easy for Slovak politicians and economists to put the blame on the federal authorities for their incapacity to curb the rise of unemployment in their region.

In a way, the situation of post-communist Czechoslovakia was hence comparable to the situation of the interwar period, when the Czech-dominated "central" authorities failed to elaborate a regional policy taking into account the specificities of Slovak economic conditions.

According to many Slovaks, it is indeed no coincidence if Václav Klaus, the prime proponent of a quick and decisive liberal reforms, referred to Alois Rašín, the first finance minister of the Czechoslovak republic in 1918 and author of unpopular austerity measures, as his role model and adopted his motto "Let them shout, the results will demonstrate that we were right"[314]. Such declarations were taken at best as evidence of a certain Czech arrogance and profound insensitivity to their problems and at worst as a definitive proof that Slovakia would be better on its own, being able to design economic policies more adapted to the realities of the region. There was among the Slovaks a (somewhat utopian) feeling that political independence was the key to the full realisation of the economic potential of the nation. As Vladimír Mečiar once put it:

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[314]Entretien avec Václav Klaus, "Tchécoslovaquie: l'art des privatisations", *Politique Internationale*, n°53, Automne 1991, p.216. As Jiří Večerník states, "it is not by chance that ... Klaus.. had on the wall above his table a portrait of ...Rašín, who applied a restrictive monetary policy, asserted the reevaluation of the Czechoslovak crown and was largely responsible for the economic recovery in early 1920s"(*Markets and People: The Czech Reform Experience in a Comparative Perspective*; Aldershot; Avebury; 1996; p.239).

> [N]ew markets will be created, and dependence on the Czech economy will be eliminated. Slovakia will become an element of international relationships, enabling it to defend its own interests. The emancipation of Slovakia must be considered not as a new isolation but as a new opportunity[315].

Economists such as J. Hajko began to think of the geographical position of Slovakia as an advantage, enabling it to be a "bridge between East and West in Europe"[316]. Both Mečiar and Marian Tkáč, Slovak vice-governor of the Czechoslovak Bank (in an interview for *Lidové noviny* on December 8, 1992) even suggested that Slovakia had the potential to become "the Switzerland of Eastern Europe"[317].

The Czech arguments

Similarly, the Czechs started to develop after 1989 arguments that tended to favour a loosening of economic links with the poorer Slovak part of the state.
The main Czech grievance concerned the amount of budgetary transfers from the Czech to the Slovak Republics. More and more Czech economists and politicians believed that, given the success of economic equalisation, the subsidisation of Slovakia (popularly described by the notion of *penezovod*, "money pipeline"[318]) was no longer necessary and that it was time to reconsider the nature of the economic relationship between the two parts of the state. As a report of the Institute for Economics of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences stated,

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[315] James O.Jackson, "Can this marriage be saved ?", *Time*, July 6, 1992,p.39

[316] J.Hajko, *Trend*, 26 January, 1, 4 and 5 (quoted in Adrian Smith, *Reconstructing the Regional Economy: Industrial Transformation and Regional Development in Slovakia*; Aldershot; Edward Elgar; 1998; pp.232-233).

[317] Mečiar quoted in "Slovaquie: Les Records d'un Dragon de l'Est", *Le Moci* (Moniteur Official du Commerce International), 18-25 Avril 1996, p.72 ; Tkác quoted in Pavlínek, "Regional", p.364.

[318] Ulc,"Czechoslovakia", p.331.

> For how long yet will the Czech republic be able to do without the sums of which it is deprived each year by a system of relations based on the so-called social justice, without it constituting a serious threat for the living standard of the current and future populations ?[319].

Accordingly, following the negotiations concerning the repartition of budgetary resources, the percentage of the funds allocated to the Czech republic increased from 40 percent in 1990 to 43 percent in 1992, while Slovakia's share was reduced from 25 to 22 percent - the remaining 35 percent being attributed to the federal centre.

Table 3.9 : Budgetary repartitions (in percent)

	1990	1991	1992
Federation	35	35	35
Czech republic	40	41.5	43
Slovak republic	25	23.5	22

Sources: Jan Adam, "Transformation to a market economy in the former Czechoslovakia", *Europe-Asia studies*, vol.45, N°4, p.632 (1990-1991) and Jaroslav Blaha and Frédéric Wehrlé, "La Fédération tchèque et slovaque mise en cause: aspects politiques et économiques", *Le courrier des pays de l'Est*, n°370, June 1992, p.50

However, having successfully questioned the budgetary repartition of the state and the basis of Czechoslovak fiscal federalism, the majority of Czech leaders also proclaimed their attachment to the rapid completion of the economic reforms. The "Scenario for economic reform" made public in September 1990 by finance minister Klaus, committed Czechoslovakia to a programme of "shock therapy" based on the liberalisation of prices, the adoption of a policy of monetary austerity where anti-inflationary measures got the priority over the maintenance of full employment or economic growth[320].

Czech federal policy-makers refused to jeopardise the transformation programme because of Slovak objections concerning the pace of the reforms and the alleged "specificity" of their

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[319]Ekonom, n°2, 1992, quoted in Jaroslav Blaha and Frédéric Wehrlé, "La Fédération tchèque et slovaque mise en cause: aspects politiques et économiques", *Le courrier des pays de l'Est*, n°370, June 1992, p.50.

[320]See for example Sharon L.Wolchik, *Czechoslovakia in transition: Politics, Economics and Society* (London, New York; Pinter; 1991), p.249.

economy. They initiated on the contrary one of the fastest and most drastic privatisation schemes in Central and Eastern Europe and justified the resort to the innovative method of "voucher privatisation" by the need to go quicker than the other neighbouring countries. Czechoslovakia had before 1989 practically no private sector at all and lagged in this respect behind its Central European neighbours, where the "second" or "underground" economy was openly thriving: "Czechoslovakia was the most 'socialized' country in Central and Eastern Europe; its industry, agriculture and virtually the whole tertiary sector were owned either by the state or by co-operatives (in the Marxist conception). The private sector was practically non-existent, and private property was all but liquidated"[321]. In 1989, at the ouset of the transition, "only 1.2 % of the labor force, 2% of all registered assets and a negligible fraction of the nation's GDP" were privately managed[322] and in 1990, the estimated percentage contribution of the private sector to GDP in the Czech Republic and Slovakia was 5 percent, far behind Hungary (16 percent) and Poland (31 percent)[323].

Moreover, the Czech insistence on maintaining an integrated "Czecho-Slovak" economy concretly rendered the divergent economic standpoints irreconcilable.
By the second-half of 1992, the Czechs had come to the conclusion that they would be economically better off and achieve a faster "return to Europe" without the Slovaks and could relate to the Balts or the Slovenes, who had decided to stop economically and financially supporting the poorer parts of the states (the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia) of which they were part[324]:

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[321]Dušan Hendrych, "Transforming Czechoslovakian Public Administration: Traditions and New Challenges", *Public Administration*, vol.71, Spring/ Summer 1993, pp.47-48.

[322]Dyba and Svejnar, "A Comparative View", p.29

[323]Allan M.Williams and Vladimir Balaz, "Transformation and Division in Central Europe", in Ray Hudson and Allan M.Williams (eds), *Divided Europe: Society and Territory* (London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi; SAGE Publications; 1999), p.172. See also Karla Brom and Mitchell Orenstein, "The Privatised Sector in the Czech Republic", *Europa-Asia Studies*, vol.46, n°6, 1994, pp.893-894. For a historical perspective on the suppression of the private sector after the second World War, see Martin Myant, *The Czechoslovak Economy 1948-1988: The Battle for Economic Reform* (Cambridge; Cambridge University Press; 1989), pp.42-55.

[324]The Czech experience is also in this respect similar to the experiences of "rich" Western regions such as Catalonia and Lombardy where economically-based separatist movements have emerged in recent years.

> When the split came, the Czechs got rid of all the bad parts. We got rid of the old weapons factories, we got rid of the unemployment, we got rid of the old Soviet frontier. We got rid of all our problems, and we gave them to the Slovaks[325].

The problem is that in a binational state like Czechoslovakia, the discussion quickly polarised and crystallised around national lines - the Slovaks becoming more and more "separatist" and the Czechs becoming more and more anxious and willing to "ditch" the Slovaks[326].

The economic debate was therefore following national faultlines even if this assertion has to be immediately nuanced by two remarks.
First of all, it would be wrong to contend that *all* the Czechs supported "shock therapy", while *all* the Slovaks favoured a "gradualist" approach. One of the most influential and consistent advocates of gradualism was the Czech Valtr Komárek, before 1989 head of the Institute for Prognostics and deputy prime-minister in charge of the economy in the first post-communist federal government[327]: he was even for some time the most popular politician in Slovakia. Similarly, some Slovaks like Marian Čalfa, federal prime minister from December 1989 to June 1992, or the Slovak Deputy Prime-Minister Jozef Kučerák[328] supported the adoption of "shock therapy".

Furthermore, the boundaries between the Czech and the Slovak economic views were more blurred than what would appear at first sight. Václav Klaus's policies were clearly not as radical and "Thatcherite" as his rhetoric. "[T]he way in which Klaus pursued his economic objectives...showed him to be a savvy politician...His reform agenda was a workable mix of economic daring and political caution. Although he talked a free-market game and backed the rhetoric with rapid privatization ... the reality was more moderate than the façade. Klaus kept

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[325]A Czech journalist, quoted in Leff, *The Czech*, p.136.

[326]see for instance Jérôme Filippini, "'Petite nation' et politique: la Tchécoslovaquie et le nationalisme slovaque", *Hérodote*, n°63, october/november 1991, p.182.

[327]Martin Dangerfield, "Ideology and the Czech Transformation: Neoliberal Rhetoric or Neoliberal Reality ?", *East European Politics and Societies*, vol.11, n°3, Fall 1997, p.443

[328]Peter Martin, "Economic Reform", p.7

an eagle eye on unemployment, selling the public on patience with lower wages in order to carry larger payrolls and attract foreign investment. His economic programme moved more quickly to transfer formal ownership than to relinquish state control..."[329]. He also acknowledged his concern for the social consequences of economic reforms:

> Systemic transformation is not an exercise in applied economics or in applied political science. It is a process that involves human beings; that affects heir day-to-day lives; that creates new groups of gainers and losers; that changes the relative political and economic strength and standing of different socio-economic groups; and that thereby destroys the original political, social, and economic equilibrium[330].

The Slovaks, lukewarm in their support for the rapid economic reforms and privatisations if compared to the Czechs appeared under a somewhat different light if compared to the Poles and Hungarians. The programme of privatisations drafted by Klaus has often been considered as the most drastic in post-communist Eastern Europe as far as its scope and pace were concerned and the Slovak reaction in front of the hardships that it brought about was for this reason rather natural and predictable. As Leff put it,

> [a]lthough Slovak hesitations and inconsistency in pursuit of the privatization process contrasts *(sic)* rather sharply with the radical Czech initiative, the difference between the two should be seen in the context of the larger pattern of privatization issue in post-communist states. In that context, it is the Czechs who appear atypical[331].

Similarly, the table below shows that the unemployment rate in Slovakia was actually conforming to the pattern observed in Hungary or Poland and was even lower than in these two countries in 1992. This should however not be taken as a significant factor, since the

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[329]Leff, *The Czech*, pp.180-181. See also ch.6 and, for a general discussion of the discrepancy between rhetoric and practice in Klaus's economic and social policies, Dangerfield, "Ideology", pp.436-469.

[330]Václav Klaus, *Renaissance: The Rebirth of Liberty in the Heart of Europe* (Washington D.C; Cato Institute; 1997), p.8 (see also p.17 and p.66)

[331]Leff, *The Czech*, p.195. See chapter 2.

obvious point of comparison for the Slovaks was the Czechs, not the Poles or the Hungarians, and they consequently experienced a feeling of relative (if not absolute) deprivation.

Table 3.10 : Unemployment rates in East-Central Europe

	1990	1991	1992
Czechoslovakia	1.0	6.6	5.1
Czech Republic	0.8	4.1	2.6
Slovak Republic	**1.5**	**11.8**	**10.4**
Hungary	1.5	8.5	12.3
Poland	6.1	11.8	13.6

Source: Statistical Bulletin, n°1, 1992 and n°2, 1994, Prague ; Focus: Eastern Europe, n°101, Deutsche Bank Research (quoted in Dedek, *The Break-up*, p.52)

In fact, after having reviewed the economically-based "separatist" arguments used by both Czech and Slovak politicians and economists after 1989, the next section now turns to demonstrate the flaws of these claims and it will be subsequently argued that neither the Czechs nor the Slovaks had any serious economic or material incentives to leave the common state. In other words, there is clearly more to the break-up of Czechoslovakia than pure economics, and the political motivations of decision-makers such as Mečiar and Klaus should not be underestimated (the role of political elites in the break-up is assessed in detail in chapter 6).

We hence first refute the notion of Slovak economic "specificities", before examining and putting into a wider perspective Czech "secessionist" arguments.

A refutation of Slovak "specificities"

The so-called "specific" features of Slovak economy were used as a plea for the implementation of a more "gradualist" economic transformation policy than in the Czech

republic. However, economists have been able to refute the validity of Slovak claims and showed that, for several reasons, Slovakia was probably not as atypical as it was claimed to be.

The first illustration of this point is the arms industry. The production was heavily concentrated in Slovakia and the federal authorities implemented a programme of conversion which especially targeted the huge factories located in the Slovak town of Martin. Subsidies of 1.5 billion crowns were granted for the industry in 1989 and 1990, and in May 1991, the federal government agreed to subsidy up to 30 percent of investment costs to support conversion programmes, and added another 1.5 billion crowns[332].
As shown in table 3.11, the federal government support for conversion was mostly (and increasingly) allocated to Slovakia: as much as 70,83 % in 1990 and 80% in 1991 of the funds went to the eastern republic.

Table 3.11: Federal government support for conversion (billion Kcs, current prices)

	1989	1990	1991
Total	0.4	1.20	1.5
CR	-	0.35	0.3
SR	0.4	0.85	1.2

Source: Ministry of Defence, Prague, 1992 (quoted in Yudit Kiss, "Lost Illusions ? Defence Industry Conversion in Czechoslovakia, 1989-92", *Europa-Asia Studies*, vol.45, n°6, 1993, p.1051)

What is more, the conversion of the Czechoslovak arms industry was not a typically Slovak ("national") issue but a wider question of regional policy. Central Slovakia, which employed 30 percent of the labour force of the country in the military industry, was not the only area affected by the post-communist changes: Southern Moravia and Prague, where respectively

[332]Martin Myant, *Transforming socialist economies: the case of Poland and Czechoslovakia* (Aldershot; Edward Elgar; 1993), p.224

20 and 17 percent of the labour force of the industry was employed, were also strongly affected by the reduction of the ouput of the Czechoslovak arms production[333].

As far as the structure of the industrial production is concerned , it seems similarly difficult to confirm the claims that the Slovak economy was geared towards the production of raw materials or intermediate, semi-finished goods exported to the Czech republic to be completed.

Certain sectors traditionally producers of semi-finished goods like construction materials or paper industry, amounted to a higher share of the industrial production in Slovakia than in the Czech lands. However, the share of certain industries equally involved in the production of semi-finished goods such as metallurgy was more important in the Czech Republic than in Slovakia.

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[333]see Aleš Čapek, "The Split", p.56; Blaha and Wehrlé, "La fédération", p.52; Oldrich Dedek et al., *The break-up*, p.56; A.Smith, *Reconstructing*; OCDE (OECD), *Politiques et Problèmes Régionaux en République Tchèque et en République Slovaque* (Paris; OECD; 1996).

Table 3.12 : The industrial structure of the Czech and Slovak economy in 1989 (in %)

Industry	Czech Republic	Slovak Republic
Total	100.0	100.0
A.Production of means of production	70.2	70.1
B.Production of consumer goods of which:	29.7	29.9
Fuels	6.1	1.1
Energy	4.0	3.7
Metallurgy: iron non-iron	8.8 2.2	7.5 2.0
Chemical and Rubber industry	9.7	16.1
Machinery	22.0	17.0
Electrical and electronics industry	3.9	5.6
Metalworking (inc.plastics)	3.2	6.1
Construction materials	3.0	4.0
Wood and furniture	2.9	3.8
Paper industry	1.8	2.7
Glass, china and ceramics	1.6	0.8
Textile industry	4.8	3.4
Apparel	1.2	2.0
Leather	2.2	2.9
Printing industry	0.4	0.5
Food and beverages	16.6	17.5
Tobacco, cooling plants, mineral springs exploitation	0.4	0.7
Other	3.9	2.6

Source: Aleš Čapek, "The Split of Czechoslovakia and the Specific Features of the Slovak Economy, in J. Křovák, *Current Economics and Politics of (ex-)Czechoslovakia*, p.53

Furthermore, the analysis of the supplies for production use and final use from selected industries in the Czech Republic and Slovakia in 1987 shows that for 16 out of the 30 industries considered, it is actually the Czech lands which relied more on semi-finished goods - or goods for production use.

Aleš Čapek asserts in this respect that "[t]he total share of supplies for final use in the [studied] industries represented 48.2 percent in the CR as compared with 48.9 percent in the SR"[334]: this definitely contradicts the usual argument about the "less finished" nature of the Slovak industrial production. The statistics concerning the structure of flows of goods between the two republics moreover demonstrate that whereas as much as 64.1 percent of Czech exports to Slovakia were semi-finished goods destined to production use, the corresponding figure for the Slovak exports to the Czech lands was only 52.4 percent[335].

As far as the level of foreign investment in Slovakia is concerned, the figures commonly put forward by the Slovaks according to which the share of Slovakia in the foreign investment in the country in the years 1990 and 1991 was only 5 to 10 percent, appear contestable. The statistics of the Czechoslovak Central Bank shed light on a slightly different situation: out of the 700 million dollars invested in the country in 1991, 78.5 percent went to the Czech republic and 21.5 percent to Slovakia - mostly in the region of Bratislava. Moreover, if the huge investments negotiated in the Czech lands by Volkswagen with Škoda and Baz are excluded, the share of foreign investments in Slovakia was as high as 37.6 percent, more than the share of the Slovak population in the state[336].

As with the armaments industry, the issue clearly had a "regional", as well as a purely "national" dimension. Most illustrative of this is the case of Bratislava, which constituted (and still constitutes) a regional pole of prosperity and managed to attract 54.4 percent of the foreign investments in Slovakia[337].

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[334] Čapek, "The Split"., pp.54-55

[335] *ibid.*, p.54

[336] Blaha and Wehrlé, "La fédération", p.52.

[337] A.Smith, "From convergence", pp.149-150. See also A.M.Williams and V.Balaz, "Transformation", p.183.

Finally, the higher rate of unemployment in Slovakia cannot be uniformly explained by invoking the insensitivity of the federal authorities to the characteristics of the republic[338].
First of all, Slovakia, having experienced exceptionally high birth rates at the beginning of the "normalisation" in the seventies, had a high share of its population looking for a first job in the early nineties. Demography was therefore a factor worsening the Slovak position, especially if compared with the Czech lands.
Secondly, the fact that the social net was for a long time more important in post-communist Slovakia than in the Czech republic did not help to curb unemployment: the Slovaks, who could claim generous social benefits, had arguably as a consequence no real incentive to actively look for a job.
Lastly, the responsibilities of the Slovak authorities cannot be disregarded. The employment policy of the Slovak republic mainly consisted until 1992 of passive measures, such as the allocation of important social benefits to the unemployed. An earlier emphasis on active policies could have significantly helped to the reduction of the unemployment rate, as illustrated by three elements. First, the Slovak authorities for a long time did not implement or promote retraining policies: "during the first four months of 1992, only slightly more than 5 000 Slovak workers followed specific trainings ; one third of them later found a new activity"[339].
Second, the Slovak republic equally lagged behind the Czech lands as far as the creation of "state-funded" jobs was concerned: " [I]n the Czech republic, some 157 000 new jobs were created by public policies in 1991 (of these, 50 000 assistant jobs, paid by the labour offices, for fresh school graduates). In the Slovak republic, such activities began with a delay, and there were only 24 000 new jobs created by public policies"[340].
Third, Slovakia did not actively support the establishment of a dynamic private sector able to absorb some of the unemployment generated by the closures of the big state conglomerates.

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[338]The following discussion largely draws on Dedek, *The Break-up*, pp.53-54.

[339]Goruppi, "La Slovacchia", p.10.

[340]Kamil Janácek, "Transition to the market: interaction of macroeconmic and social policy", in Krovák (ed.), *Current*, p.7.

The difference between the Czech and Slovak unemployment rates has to be partly explained by the higher dynamism and greater entrepreneurial opportunities of the Czech private sector: "[I]n the Czech Republic, private sector's share in the gross domestic product was almost 10 % in 1991, compared to 4 % in Slovakia. As a result, the contribution of the private sector to new job creation [was] different in both republics... [and] the different unemployment rates in the two republics [were], among other factors, also due to the differing dynamics of the private sector"[341]. The small and medium-sized private firms created in 1991 250,000 jobs in the Czech republic, but only 30,000 in Slovakia[342].

The so-called Slovak "specificities" are therefore in practice difficult to prove and rather contestable. Moreover, Slovakia fared better than the Czech lands on certain "structural" indicators, such as the level of capital obsolescence or pollution (tables 3.13 and 3.14).

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[341] *ibid.*, p.3

[342] Bernard Michel, "Tchécoslovaquie: le divorce de velours", *Politique internationale*, n°58, Winter 1992-1992, p.35.

Table 3.13 : Obsolescence of fixed capital (in %): comparison Czech Republic / Slovakia

	Czech Republic	Czech Republic	Slovakia	Slovakia
	Buildings	Equipments	Buildings	Equipment
Productive sectors	39.1	58.2	30.5	57.4
- Agriculture	32.0	61.2	23.8	54.2
- Industry	42.3	58.3	34.2	57.6
- Internal trade	32.1	57.8	23.3	56.3
- External trade	21.3	67.3	11.2	37.3
Non-productive sectors	38.1	59.0	28.8	57.2
Science and R&D	37.5	60.6	27.2	50.3
Housing	38.6	44.6	28.0	39.8
Education	37.0	69.4	24.3	57.3
Health	47.4	63.9	27.1	41.6
Social sector	38.6	67.6	23.1	39.1

Source: Ekonom, n°2 / 1992, quoted in Jaroslav Blaha and Frédéric Wehrlé, "La Fédération tchèque et slovaque mise en cause: aspects politiques et économiques", *Le courrier des pays de l'Est*, n° 370, June 1992, p.51

Table 3.14

	Surface (km^2)	Number of inhabitants	Solid emissions (ton / km^2)	SO2 (ton / km^2)
Czech republic	78,865	10,362,553	8.5	25.3
Slovak republic	49,035	5,287,000	6.5	11.5

Source: Ekonom, n°2, 1992, quoted in Blaha and Wehrlé, "La Fédération", p.52

The flaws of the Czech argument

Having thus demonstrated that the Slovak economically-based separatist arguments were only partly legitimate, the flaws of the Czech contentions should now be considered.

Czech politicians often took a condescending approach towards their Slovak partners. During the discussions about the privatisation programme, the opposition of several Sovak parties to Klaus's project of "voucher privatisation", was for instance taken by the Czechs as a proof that Slovaks "knew nothing about economics"[343].

The uncompromising attitude of the Czechs was however not necessarily economically and politically justified. Economically speaking, "shock therapy" was not the only option opened to a country like Czechoslovakia, which did not have in 1989 to face the immediate economic difficulties of, say, Poland. Czechoslovakia could consequently have opted for a "gradualist" option on the Hungarian model, rather than for a Polish kind of "shock therapy". As Marie Lavigne put it, in 1989, the Czechoslovak

> economy was still a standard centrally planned, state-owned and party-controlled economy. But the current economic situation was good. External accounts were balanced, the economy was growing slowly but there were no dramatic shortages and the level of consumption and living was perhaps still higher than in the GDR. Prices were stable through price control, and there seemed to be no major inflationary pressures. The movement which had achieved the Velvet Revolution under the political and moral leadership of Václav Havel, the Civic Forum, seemed to have some margin of manoeuvre in launching a wide-scale, step-by-step restructuring programme rather than introducing drastic stabilisation measures. The economy was not overheating and its main problems seemed to be how to modernise obsolescent

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[343]Paul Wilson, "The end of the Velvet revolution", *The New York Review of Books*, August 13, p.58. In a somewhat reminiscent episode, when a delegation of the IMF visited independent Slovakia in February 1993, they left after three days, "in despair that the Slovak central bank seemed incompetent" ("Not so amicable", *The Economist*, 17/04/1993, vol.327, n°7807, p.50).

industries and to free decision-making of enterprises once the tutelage of the party on the economy had ended. Nevertheless the 'shock therapy" model was used[344].

It remains a matter of debate whether the Czech advocacy of "shock therapy" was a simple miscalculation resulting from a lack of awareness about the Slovak question, or a politically-driven choice (this question will be discussed in chapter 6).
Suffice it for now to tentatively say that there was probably a not negligible amount of political, indeed quasi-"ideological" and "nationalist", motives behind Klaus's advocacy of speedy economy reforms.
With somewhat more confidence, it seems fair to argue that the adoption of a "gradualist" economic policy would have met with less resistance and resentment in the Slovak part of the country and could have thus largely contributed to make possible the maintenance of a common state between the Czechs and the Slovaks.

Finally, it is morally possible to acknowledge the duty or responsability of the wealthier to assist the economic development of less favoured areas of the same state: in Allen Buchanan's words, "[i]f distributive justice requires some redistribution of wealth from the better off to the worse off, and if this redistribution will cease if the better off citizens withdraw from the cooperative scheme that has hitherto united them with the worse off, then we will be inclined to conclude that secession by the better off is morally objectionable"[345]. On this basis, the Czech tendency to let the Slovaks secede without being willing to seriously consider a compromise on the scope and the speed of economic reforms, might well appear unfounded and illegitimate.

Therefore, none of the Slovak or Czech economic secessionist arguments really seems to resist serious consideration and an assessment of their respective claims meets with several problems of definition.

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[344]Marie Lavigne, *The Economics of Transition: from Socialist Economy to Market Economy* (London and Basingstoke; Macmillan; 1995), pp.101-102.

[345]Allen Buchanan, *Secession: the Morality of Political Divorce from Fort Sumter to Lithuania and Quebec* (Boulder; Westview Press; 1991), p.16.

The most significant one is the result of the ambiguities surrounding the concept of "equalisation". The Slovak economy consistently caught up with the Czech during the four decades of communism, but this is only part of the picture and cannot account for the Slovak contention that their economy was still lagging behind and needed Czech economic and financial support.

This can only be explained if an alternative vision of "equalisation" is introduced. Whereas the Slovaks tended to equate "equalisation" with the actual achievement of economic "equality", the Czechs saw it as only limited to the duty of reducing the economic differential. After 1989, the Czechs considered that the subsidisation of Slovakia had achieved its goals and that there was no need anymore for a policy of transfer of resources between two regions, which were, if not "equal", at least "equalised".

As a consequence, Czech and Slovak elites became convinced that they would be better off to live in two separate and independent states. The break-up was considered economically advantageous for several reasons.

First of all, it was deemed to be the best way to definitely clarify the situation of the state on the international stage because Western investors hesitated to set up businesses in Czechoslovakia as long as the negotiations between Czechs and Slovaks were not concluded.

Secondly, given the distinct economic contexts in the two republics, the creation of two independent states was perhaps the only solution to allow the Czechs and the Slovaks to pursue economic policies specifically tailored to their different needs and objectives.

Finally, the international economic context was favorable to the foundation of two small independent states. The technological revolution has changed the conditions of economic success, rendering obsolete the notions of economies of scale and scope, at the profit of attributes such as flexibility or capacity of innovation. Accordingly, two small homogeneous states like the Czech republic and Slovakia are economically viable, perhaps more than the common binational state[346].

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[346]See chapter 4 and Josef C.Brada, "Breaking up is hard to do: the economics of creating independent Czech and Slovak republics", in Krovák, *Current*, pp.17-31.

The economic consequences of the break-up

However, economic considerations only played a secondary role in the break-up of Czechoslovakia.

A retrospective look at the economic consequences of the severing of the economic links between the Czech and the Slovak republics demonstrates that the obvious discrepancy between the Czechs and the Slovaks concerning economic reform, was not sufficient in itself to explain the break-up: the economic situation was for both Slovaks but also Czechs an incentive to remain in a common state.

The peaceful nature of the split is a positive factor which prevented serious economic disruptions and thus presented a sharp contrast with the break-up of the two other communist federations, the Soviet Union and especially Yugoslavia[347]. Yet, the economic consequences of the division of Czechoslovakia should not be underestimated.

Three successive reports published in 1991 by the Czech government, the Slovak Academy of Sciences and the Slovak government concluded that economic dissolution would have an adverse effect on the economy of both republics, even if Slovakia was considered likely to be more affected by the division.

To start with, a rapid examination of the interrepublican trade between the two republics showed that Slovakia was much more dependent than the Czech republic on mutual trade. Whereas only 11 percent of Czech goods were destined to the Slovak market, more than 27 percent of the Slovak production went to the Czech lands[348]. The table below illustrates for different kinds of goods the extent of Slovak dependence - 38.6 percent of Slovak wholesale trade being for instance exported to the Czech republic.

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[347]See for example Milica Z. Bookman, "War and peace: the divergent breakups of Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia", p.181, *Journal of Peace research*, vol.31, n°2, 1994, pp.175-187.

[348]"Czechoslovakia: the economy in transition - Roundtable: prospects for reform", *RFE / RL Research report*, p.29, vol.1, n°12, 20 March 1992, p.29

Table 3.15: Interrepublican trade in 1989 (in percentages)

Exports	Slovak Republic	Czech Republic
Investment goods	37.4	19.6
Products for industry	30.8	16.2
Consumer goods (at retail prices)	26.0	14.0
Nonproductive goods	38.4	5.5
Wholesale trade	38.6	8.7

Source: Aspekty a Dosledky Rozdelenia Ekonomiky ČSFR na Obdelene Ekonomy SR a CR, Bratislava, Slovak Academy of Sciences, November 1991, p.23 (quoted in Peter Martin, "Slovakia: calculating the costs of independence", *RFE / RL*, vol.1, n°12, 20 March 1992, p.34)

Similarly, due to the "socialist division of labour", the production of certain goods was concentrated in one of the two republics: virtually all of the automobile industry was located in the Czech lands, while 99 percent of TV sets and the totality of the refrigerators were made in Slovakia[349]. The break-up was therefore bound to have a short-term negative impact on Czech and Slovak trade patterns.

More generally, the division of the state was widely acknowledged as detrimental to the prospects of both Czech and Slovak economies. The Czech and Slovak gross domestic products were deemed to suffer from a loss of respectively 2.1 and 5.7 %, compared to the optimal situation of the continuation of the joint state[350].

Conclusion

Considering all these elements, the real issue was not the economic divergences between Czechs and Slovaks or the fact that it made "economic" sense for the two nations to split up.

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[349] *Conjoncture* (Paribas), Octobre 1992, p.134

[350] Ivan Šujan, "The Czech and Slovak Republics: a starting point", in Krovák, *Current*, pp.45-46.

The essential question is why, given the circumstances (i.e, the evident adverse impact of a divorce on Slovak and Czech economies), Czech and Slovak leaders decided to pursue "go-it-alone" policies.

Economic arguments were conveniently used by "populist" politicians to justify their uncompromising policies -something of a paradox given the narrowing of the economic and sociological gap between Czechs and Slovaks during the communist era. Mečiar's eleventh-hour attempts to secure the adoption of a common federal budget for 1993 and the proposal of a Czech-Slovak union on 21 August 1992 suggest that he wanted to take advantage of Czech subsidies for a bit longer.
As far as the Czechs are concerned, the assessment is somewhat more problematic. They had an economic interest, at least in the short term, in letting the poorer Slovaks go, but the debate surrounding economic reform was also something of a good pretext for Klaus and its coalition partners of the CDA (Civic Democratic Alliance) to justify their adoption of an uncompromising stance during the negotiations of the second half of 1992.

The economic reforms started by the post-communist government affected Slovakia more than the Czech republic but the really existing economic differences between Czechs and Slovaks were still limited and manageable: "it was not regional inequality which contributed to the downfall of Czechoslovakia as much as the fear of its return"[351].
Statistics are meaningless, unless they become politically mobilised: as early as 1988, Robert Kaiser stressed that "equality and the process of equalisation is as much a matter of perception as it is an issue suitable for objective assessment. For the nationalist, there is undoubtedly sufficient evidence of inequality to induce feelings of relative deprivation"[352].

This was amply demonstrated by the debate between Czechs and Slovaks about "who [which republic] subsidizes whom ?". An opinion poll conducted in 1991 showed that, if both Czechs

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[351]Peter Ferdinand, "Nationalism, community and democratic transition in Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia", in David Potter, David Goldblatt, Margaret Kiloh and Paul Lewis (eds), *Democratization* (Cambridge; Polity Press; 1997), p.484.

[352]Robert Kaiser, *National Territoriality*, p.221.

and Slovaks overwhelmingly agreed with the statement that "one republic ought not to have to pay for the other" (88 and 87 percent respectively), they had however in practice a clear and completely opposite perception of "who was paying for whom". Only 10 percent of the Slovak and 34 percent of the Czech respondents believed that the resources of the federation were equally distributed between the two republics. Moreover, 67 percent of the Slovaks thought that the system favoured the Czechs - who in turn strongly rejected this idea (70 percent disagreed with the statement "the present system favours the Czechs")[353].

Czechs and Slovaks also had deeply divergent economic histories, which logically affected their reactions towards economic reforms in the post-communist era.

The Czechs looked at the interwar republic as an economic (and political, as seen in chapter 2) "golden age" when Czechoslovakia - and especially the Czech lands - counted among the most developed regions of Europe. In sharp contrast, they considered the communist era as an era of long and unchecked economic decline: at the end of the 1980s, Czechoslovakia occupied the 42nd place in the economic rankings, "well below many Third World countries"[354]. The conclusion drawn by most Czechs was thus predictable: planned economy has obviously been a disaster and a swift transition to market economy is the only and fastest way to go back into the fold of Western Europe.

For the Slovaks, however, the economic experience of communism was strikingly different. As Aleš Čapek and Gerald Sazama put it, "[o]ne Slovak generation ha[d] seen Slovakia change from a less developed agrarian country to an industrial economy, a process which was accompanied by a rapid growth of the standards of living - by the standards of Eastern Europe, - an economic miracle"[355]. The Slovaks, which had fared relatively well under the communist regime, were likely to be extremely reluctant and sensitive in front of the economic difficulties inevitably brought about by the transition.

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[353]Michael J.Deis, "A Study of Nationalism in Czechoslovakia", *RFE/ RL Research Report*, 31 January 1992, p.10-11.

[354]Holy, *The Little*, p.155.

[355]Čapek and Sazama,"Czech", p.218.

Economic reasons were nevertheless at best secondary in the break-up of Czechoslovakia. Economic transition cannot realistically be considered as the main cause of the velvet divorce, but at most as one of its explanatory factors. The Slovak prime minister from April 1991 to June 1992, Ján Čarnogurský implicitly admitted that and stated that "none of the Baltic republics prior to their decision on independence calculated how much [sovereignty] would cost"[356]. Similarly, Havel remarked that "for many Slovaks, whether they are governed well or badly, with their participation or without it, with their interests in mind or without them, is less important than the bare fact that they are governed from somewhere else"[357]. In post-communist Czechoslovakia at least, separatism was therefore only loosely linked with material interest(s)[358].

The outbursts of nationalist feelings in the two republics had little to do with economic inequalities (which had by 1989 largely disappeared), even if economic arguments were demagogically used by politicians to justify the division of state.
Political determinants were more important than economic considerations in the process that led to the break-up: in a binational state like Czechoslovakia, in the context of a dramatic regime-change necessitating the management of a "triple transition" (and given the contradictory economic experiences of Czechs and Slovaks), it was electorally-rewarding for politicians to blame the "Other" nation for all the economic hardships.

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[356]Radio Bratislava, 27 September 1991, quoted in Peter Martin, "Slovakia: calculating the cost of independence", *RFE/RL research report*, vol.1, n°12, 20 March 1992, p.36

[357]Havel, *Summer meditations*, p.26

[358]Except perhaps, the material interest of the elites (see ch.6). It would be interesting, but outside the scope of this dissertation to see whether Steven Majstorovic's assertion that "the forces of ethnonationalism prioritize non-material goals over material considerations and operate relatively independently from economic / class interests that are represented by economic inequality" ("Politicized ethnicity and economic inequality: a subjective perspective and a cross-national examination", *Nationalism and ethnic politics*, vol.1, n°1, Spring 1995, p.48) could be proved in cases other than Czechoslovakia.

CHAPTER IV
INTERNATIONAL FACTORS IN THE BREAK-UP OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA

> Both Palacký's and Masaryk's political thought is determined by *threats*. Europe is threatened by two fatal dangers concentrated at its center. Central Europe, as a federation of free nations or at least as the common democratic state of Czechs and Slovaks, confronts these dangers from two sides and defends all of Europe... Palacký justified the necessity of a Central European federation with the same arguments Masaryk used to advocate a common state of Czechs and Slovaks -aggressive Prussianism and Tsarist expansionism. The common state of Czechs and Slovaks was founded when these threats were real. It ceased to exist when these threats disappeared
>
> Karel Kosík[359]

After having seen in the two previous chapters that the differences between the Czechs and the Slovaks in terms of political culture or economic development cannot on their own, or in combination, provide an explanation for the break-up of Czechoslovakia, this chapter now turns to the last of the three elements that would tend to suggest the ineluctability of the division of the state.

What has been earlier termed the "geopolitical argument" seeks to explain the division of Czechoslovakia by (at least implicitly) pointing at its inevitable character, and states that the Czechs and the Slovaks logically split up since their union no longer made sense in the changing post-1989 international environment and given the apparent end of the German threat or international pressures disallowing separation (i.e Soviet hegemony).
Scholars such as Judy Batt, Jacques Rupnik, William Wallace, Frédéric Wehrlé or Karel Kosík (in the quotation in exerguis) contend that, in the absence of external or exogenous

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[359]Karel Kosík, "The Third Munich", *Telos*, vol.25, n°94, Winter 1993-1994, p.150.

constraints, the nature of the relation between Czechs and Slovaks, and subsequently the existence of the common state itself, was bound to be opened to question after each shift in the international system[360].

This chapter however purposes to provide a refutation of this "geopolitical" argument and demonstrate that the end of Czechoslovakia in 1992 was not a direct result or consequence of the international environment.
International aspects only played a minor role in the process of the dissolution of the Czechoslovak federation and did not make it inevitable: the international environment was not a sufficient condition for the disintegration of the state.

A first section looks at the controversies surrounding the foundation of a Czechoslovak state and considers the extent to which the union of the Czechs and Slovaks was the artificial product of international circumstances.
A subsequent section will argue that, whereas the collapse of the Yugoslav and Soviet federations had a relatively limited impact on Czech and Slovak attitudes between 1989 and 1992, the gradual redefinition of security (in economic more than in military terms) was a decisive factor in the velvet divorce. In this context, the connection between the desire to "go back to Europe" (integration) and "secessionist" strategies (fragmentation) will be documented.
After the end of the direct Soviet military threat, Czech and Slovak national interests increasingly diverged. The traditional historical animosities between Czechs and Germans and Slovaks and Hungarians reemerged and exacerbated Czech-Slovak tensions: Slovaks were in this context seen by the Czechs as ambivalent towards reunified Germany, and Czechs were allegedly unprepared to defend Slovak interests against Hungary.
Despite all this, the role of the international environment in the break-up of Czechoslovakia remained limited and, unlike the end of the First republic in 1938/39, the second (and definitive) dissolution of the state in 1992 was the result of internal dynamics. The union and

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[360]Batt, *The New Slovakia*, p.2 ; Rupnik, "The International Context", pp.271-278 ; William V Wallace, "From Czechs", p.47 ; Wehrlé, *Le Divorce.*

the eventual "disunion" of the two small Czech and Slovak nations rested on more than international pressures.

The historical background: Czechoslovakia as a product of the international system ?

Chapter one briefly discussed the circumstances of the birth of Czechoslovakia. More specifically, historians have advanced three contradictory conceptions of the state creation[361].

The first (and most widely accepted) emphasizes the decisive contribution of the émigré leadership and especially of the Triumvirate Masaryk-Beneš-Štefánik. The second, actively promoted by the communist authorities, concentrates on the impact of the October revolution and affirms the direct causality between the Bolshevik victory and the collapse of Autria-Hungary. In the words of the chief communist ideologist Václav Kopecký, "[t]he historic fact is that the decisive factor in the liberation of the Czech and Slovak nations in 1918 was the powerful influence of the victorious Great October Socialist Revolution in Russia in 1917. Without the Soviet October in 1917 there would not have been a Czechoslovak October 1918; there would not have been an independent Czechoslovak state"[362]. Finally, the third thesis focuses on the activities of the resistance at home and sees the role of politicians such as Karel Kramář or Alois Rašín (the members of the so-called Czech *maffia*) as the determining factor in the eventual foundation of an independent Czechoslovak state.

The origins of the state may therefore be the object of a long-standing *Historikerstreit*, but what could be called the "Masaryk-Triumvirate" and the "Soviet" schools have nevertheless in common their focus on the international environment.Moreover, even Kramář, an

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[361]Kalvoda, *The Genesis*, pp.5-9.

[362]quoted in Jaroslav Opat, "On the Emergence of Czechoslovakia", in Gordon Skilling, *Czechoslovakia, 1918-88*, p.41. See also the writings of the historian Václav Král, who argued that "the revolutionary working people at home and on the fronts who, having been inspired by the example of the Great October Socialist Revolution, buried the old, reactionary monarchy" (Václav Král, About Masaryk's and Beneš's Counter-Revolutionary and Anti-Soviet Politics, Prague, 1953, p.7, quoted in Kalvoda, *The Genesis*, p.510).

outspoken proponent of neo-Slavism, also believed until 1915 that the "liberation" of Czechs and Slovaks would come through the intervention of an external actor, Tsarist Russia.
The Czechs and the Slovaks have been dependent throughout their history on the inevitable connections between their internal affairs and the international environment. As the Slovak historian Daniel Rapant wrote in 1967,

> the existing international conditions and, in particular, their dynamics...[have been] the determining factor of our [the Slovaks... and the Czechs] national development[363].

It was already on account of this perceived linkage that František Palacký, the historian "father of the [Czech] nation", famously declined an invitation to the Frankfurt Congress in April 1848, arguing that "if Austria did not exist, we would have had to invent it". Palacký recognised the weak position of the Czechs as a small nation surrounded by two powerful neighbours, Germany and Russia (who was however, probably until the invasion of 1968, seen as a friendly power by a large proportion of the Czechs)[364]. He supported the idea of Austro-Slavism, the preservation of the Habsburg monarchy as the best guarantee and protection for the Czechs and advocated the federalisation of the empire on national lines[365].
Czech hopes suffered a major set-back after the 1867 Compromise, but the overwhelming majority of the Czech elite (including Kramář and Masaryk) consistently attempted before 1914 to save the Austria-Hungarian monarchy on a new basis which would have granted extensive self-government to the lands of the Crown of St-Wenceslas (trialism instead of dualism).
Similarly, on the Slovak side, the survival of the nation was perceived to be best ensured through autonomy within the Hungarian kingdom, not independence (or political union with the Czechs). This message was repeatedly conveyed in the declaration of the Slovak national

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[363]Daniel Rapant, "Slováci v dejinách: retrospektiva a perspektivy", *Slovenské pohl'ady*, 4 April 1967 (quoted in Wehrlé, L*e Divorce*, p.25).

[364]This Russophilism of the Czechs and Slovaks contrasts sharply with the deep-rooted distrust and suspicion characteristic of Polish and Hungarian attitudes towards Russia.

[365]See for instance Frank Hadler, "Böhmen und Mähren im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert", in Bahlcke, Eberhard and Polívka, *Böhmen*, p.CXI.

assembly in Liptovsky Svätý Mikulaš (10 April 1848), the memorandum of the Slovak nation in June 1861 as well as in the speeches of Slovak representatives in the Budapest parliament[366].

The first World War changed the rules of the game in the international system. The end of the multinational Habsburg, Romanov and Ottoman empires and the invocation of the principle of national self-determination allowed the merging of Czechs and Slovaks into a common and sovereign state. The country was in many respects a product of the new European concert imposed by the victorious powers of the Entente (United Kingdom, France, United States, Italy) in Versailles, and was conceived, as seen in chapter 1, as a *cordon sanitaire* between defeated Germany and Bolshevik Russia.

The character of the Czecho-slovak union was subsequently questioned after each shift in the international system.
Hence, in 1938, Hitler's determination to destroy the *status quo* provoked the downfall of Czechoslovakia, once the country lost in Munich the support of its traditional backers, France and the United Kingdom. Czechs and Slovaks went their own ways, the radical wing of the Slovak People's Party taking advantage of the new international environment to declare, with Nazi Germany's support, the independence of Slovakia in March 1939. Czechoslovakia thus broke up for the first time because of external pressures and the expansionist policies of Hitler - even if the disaffection of the Slovaks from the state played a role in the process which led to the establishement of an "independent" Slovakia and of a protectorate of Bohemia-Moravia.
In 1945 however, the defeat of Germany provoked a new systemic change. Czechoslovakia was reborn and the communist and Soviet domination of the country from February 1948 to December 1989 constrained relations between Czechs and Slovaks within the boundaries of a common state.

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[366]The texts of the 1848 and 18761 declarations can be found in Jörg K.Hoensch, *Dokumente zur Autonomiepolitik der Slowakischen Volkspartei Hlinkas* (Munich, Vienna; R.Oldenbourg Verlag; 1984; pp.71-74 and pp.92-99). See also for example p.106 the oath to the Hungarian state taken by Ferdis Juriga on 26 April 1915.

All this would *a priori* suggest that Czechoslovakia remained one only when the international system was stable: as soon as the system changed, Czechs and Slovaks challenged the nature of their union. This especially accounts for the split of 1938-39, even though common sense would have dictated a unified approach to German (and Hungarian) revisionist aggressions.
Following this line of argument, what is of primary interest is how the end of the Cold War changed the relations between Czechs and Slovaks. In other words, we shall consider whether the shift of the international system had an impact on the divorce of the two nations in 1992, and, as the proponents of the "geopolitical" argument put it, whether the end of the European bipolarity caused the dissolution of the state.
To be sure, the fall of the communist regime in Czechoslovakia was itself an event profoundly connected with international developments. The "velvet revolution" was made possible largely by the domino effect of the collapse of the Polish, Hungarian and East German regimes and the abandonment of the Brezhnev doctrine by the Soviet leadership led by Mikhail Gorbachev[367].

First, the "contagious" impact of the declarations of sovereignty that swept across Eastern Europe after the fall of communism on Czech-Slovak relations is appraised. A following section then examines how the emergence of an international system marked by a redefinition of security and the advent of globalisation put heavy strains on the Czecho-Slovak marriage and acted as a catalyst for the dissolution of the common state.

The "revenge of the nations" ?

It has been commonplace to consider the break-up of Czechoslovakia as part of the broader process of disintegration of the communist ethnofederations.
Stéphane Pierré-Caps argues that the fact that the "nations without history" (without a state) like the Slovenes , the Macedonians and of course the Slovaks, nearly simultaneously achieved statehood is not a coincidence or the result of the irony of history but the consequence of the belief of these small nations that they could after 1989 free themselves from the geopolitical determinism until then an essential component of their self-

[367]See for instance Archie Brown, *The Gorbachev Factor* (Oxford, New York; Oxford University Press; 1996) and Jacques Lévesque, *The Enigma of 1989: The USSR and the Liberation of Eastern Europe* (Berkeley; University of California Press; 1997).

definitions[368]. In a somewhat similar way, Reneo Lukic and Allen Lynch adopt a standpoint which purposely aims at stressing what they call the "structural comparabilities"[369] between the disintegrations of the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia - even if they devote only five pages of their more than 400 page-long book to Czechoslovakia. Generally speaking, "[t]he formation of two new [Czech and Slovak] states, in 1993, can be seen as the height of the disintegration of Austria-Hungary into nation-states ; this event could only take place after the collapse of the Eastern bloc. According to this interpretation, it is then a normal stage in the emancipation of minority ethnic groups...The break-up of the Czech and Slovak federative republic...can be considered, in the context of the increasing relevance of the ethnic factor since 150 years, as an expression of one of the 'mega-trends': the mobilization of ethnic groups which do not hesitate to take risks"[370].

Several external factors could at first sight be seen to have accelerated the process of dissolution of Czechoslovakia. The collapse of the Soviet bloc and Yugoslavia provoked a frenzy of declarations of sovereignty (started by Lithuania in March 1990, followed by Georgia in April 1991, Croatia and Slovenia in June, Tadjikistan, Estonia, Latvia, Ukraine, Belarus, Azerbaïdjan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan in August, Armenia and Moldova in September, Turkmenistan in October and finally Bosnia-Hercegovina and Macedonia in 1992)[371] and it seems difficult to believe that these events had no impact on Czech, and especially, Slovak elites.

Certain statements of Slovak politicians show how events in Yugoslavia, and to a lesser extent in the USSR, may have acted as examples for Slovakia. Mečiar's contention in July 1991 that "the struggle of the Slovenes for their identity is a model for the struggle of

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[368]Stéphane Pierré-Caps, *La Multination: l'Avenir des Minorités en Europe centrale et Orientale*, (Paris; Editions Odile Jacob; 1995), p.13, pp.29-30 and 43-44

[369]Lukic and Lynch, *Europe*, p.6

[370]Martin Bútora and Zora Bútorová, "Identités en transition: de la Tchécoslovaquie à la Slovaquie", *Politique et sociétés*, n°28, 14e année, automne 1995, pp.113-114

[371]See Guy Hermet, *Histoire des Nations et du Nationalisme en Europe* (Paris; Editions du Seuil; 1996), pp.224-225; Shehadi, "Ethnic", p.54.

Slovakia to solve many of its painful problems"[372] and the three-point plan that its Movement for a Democratic Slovakia started to implement after June 1992[373] -providing for the adoption of a Slovak Republic's declaration of sovereignty (on 17 July 1992), a Slovak constitution taking precedence over federal laws (on 1 September) as well as the election of a Slovak president (a post to which Michal Kováč was finally elected in February 1993)- reflect this.

Furthermore, Jozef Prokeš, chairman of the Slovak National Party, and Ján Čarnogurský, Slovak prime minister, congratulated Slovene and Croatian leaders following their declaration of independence in June 1991[374].

Čarnogurský, in an interview he gave one month later to the French daily *Libération* expressed his belief that

> the events in Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union will find their echoes here [in Czechoslovakia], too. The Slovaks have a sense of national solidarity. But the Czechoslovak federation is not a priority for them, on the contrary[375].

At the same time, the Western powers, probably drawing lessons from the failure of their intervention in Yugoslavia, were unlikely to insist strongly on the maintenance of Czechoslovakia, and Slovak politicians acquired the conviction that the prospect of a division of the state would not meet with the opposition of the international community. František Mikloško, president of the Slovak National Council (and member of Public Against Violence, the most "federalist" Slovak political formation), acknowledged in December 1990 that

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[372]"Compare and contrast", *The Economist*, July 13th 1991, p.53 ; Michael Kraus, "Returning to Europe, separately: international factors in Czechoslovakia's dissolution, 1989-1992", in Michael Kraus and Ronald D.Liebowitz (eds), *Russia and Eastern Europe after communism: The Search for New Political, Economic, and Security Systems* (Boulder; Westview Press; 1996), p.234.

[373]Jan Obrman, "Slovakia declares Sovereignty ; President Havel Resigns", *RFE/RL Research report*, vol.1, n°31, 31 July 1992, p.25.

[374]Mary Hockaday, "Separatism stirring in a rural backwater", *The Independent*, 26 June 1991; Rick Fawn and James Mayall, "Recognition, self-determination and secession in Post-Cold War international society"in Rick Fawn and Jeremy Larkins (ed.), *International society after the Cold War: Anarchy and Order Reconsidered* (Basingstoke and London; Macmillan; 1996), p.204.

[375]Interview in *Libération*, quoted in M.Kraus, "Returning", p.234.

> [t]he movements of disintegration in the USSR and Yugoslavia strongly influence our consciences, and one should not underestimate the effect that Slovenia's independence would have. I can imagine quite easily the West, after being faced with the *fait accompli* of Yugoslav disintegration, renouncing its hostility towards the changes of borders in post-communist Europe[376].

As seen earlier, the West also had a more indirect influence, since solving the "national" issue was expected, particularly by the Czechs, to trigger a new wave of foreign investments: Czechoslovakia had been lagging significantly behind Hungary and Poland in this respect since 1989, allegedly to a large extent because of the uncertainties resulting from the protracted negotiations between the Czech and Slovak leaders.
Mečiar, Čarnogurský, Mikloško and Prokeš's claims would hence suggest that the "Soviet and Yugoslav disintegrations and the rise of the successor states provided further ammunition for the arguments of Slovak confederalists and separatists that national self-determination required the creation of an independent Slovak state"[377].
Yet, the impact of the fall of Yugoslavia on Czechoslovakia was ambiguous, and more likely to act as an incentive toward moderation than as a role model. As Rupnik put it,

> [t]hough the division of Yugoslavia might, in its early stages (until June 1991), have inspired some advocates of Slovak independence, the violence and war which followed have if anything been a deterrent or a moderating influence on the protagonists of the Czech-Slovak divorce. The Yugoslav counter-example has no doubt made them aware of the risks involved and thus contributed to its peaceful and negotiated outcome[378].

Confronted with these evidence, it seems difficult to give much credit to the view that the end of Czechoslovakia was conditioned by the international environment. The external influence

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[376]Sophie Shihab, "La Crise de la Fédération Tchécoslovaque", *Le Monde*, 29 December 1990

[377]M.Kraus, "Returning", p.234

[378]Rupnik, "The international context", p.273.

on the break-up of the state was only limited and should not be overestimated: the international community conditioned the nature of the break-up more than the break-up itself. Czech and, to a lesser extent Slovak, politicians appeared concerned with their international "image", and tried to mitigate the effects of a divorce (even "velvet") which undoubtedly tarnished the reputation of Czechoslovakia as a model for all the other countries of Eastern Europe. The sometimes unrestrained admiration of the West because of the "velvet revolution"[379] (referred to as the "kinder, gentler revolution"[380], the "glorious"[381] or the "most delightful of all...Central European revolutions"[382]), soon gave way to a badly disguised disappointment where the only, limited, consolation was often something of the type "at least, they did not fight like the Serbs and the Croats". Typical of Western European attitudes were the reactions of M. Pinheiro, the spokeman of the European Community, which declared on June 1992, after the parliamentary elections which sealed the fate of the common state, that "the aim should be integration rather than disintegration"[383] or of Alain Lamassoure, the French minister for European affairs, which observed that "[i]t is paradoxical that commercial barriers are being erected between Bohemia and Slovakia...at the very moment when we are considering doing away with them between the EC and these countries"[384].

In order to assuage the worries of the international community and especially not to compromise the transfer of the association agreement signed by Czechoslovakia with the European Community to the new states, Czech and Slovak leaders attempted to establish their

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[379]For a full account of the events of November 1989 in Czechoslovakia, see: John F.N Bradley, *Czechoslovakia's velvet revolution, a political analysis* (Boulder, East European Monographs; New York; Columbia University Press; 1992); Michal Andrew Kukral, *Prague 1989: Theater of Revolution, A Study in Humanistic Political Geography* (Boulder, East European Monographs; New York, Columbia University Press; 1997); Luers, "Czechoslovakia's road to revolution"; Bernard Wheaton and Zdeněk Kavan, *The velvet revolution: Czechoslovakia, 1988-1991* (Boulder; Westview Press; 1992).

[380]J.F Brown, *Surge to Freedom: The End of Communist Rule in Eastern Europe* (Durham NC; Duke University Press; 1991), pp.149-179.

[381]Misha Glenny, *The Rebirth of history: Eastern Europe in the age of democracy* (London; Penguin; 1990), p.22-49

[382]Garton Ash, *We the People,* pp.78-79

[383]Rupnik, "The international context", p.276.

[384]*Le Monde*, 15 April 1993, quoted in Rupnik, *ibid., p.276.*

credentials by, for example, negotiating the establishment of a customs union and the maintenance of a common currency between the Czech and the Slovak republics[385]. However, the common currency only survived the Czechoslovak state by six weeks[386] and the association agreements had to be renegotiated, which delayed their concrete implementation, especially compared to Poland and Hungary[387].

The redefinition of security after the end of the Cold War and globalisation: implications for Czech and Slovak nationhood

More than in the "contagion effect" of the post-1989 East European events, the "international" roots of the Czecho-slovak break-up have to be found in a broader analysis of the shift in the international system. In a study of the dynamic of secession, Viva Ona Bartkus argues that "a gradual transformation of the international system has moderated the traditional security and economic benefits of integration into a large state"[388].

Security is "an essentially disputed concept"[389], which tends to escape easy definition and was often seen during the Cold War in purely military terms. The international system tended to be by nature profoundly hostile to small nations, unable to ensure their physical survival without becoming constituent parts of larger states. Small nations in the middle of one of the most disputed areas of Europe, Czechs and Slovaks have had in the twentieth century to be faced with the ineluctable military superiority of their German - in 1938/39 - and Russian (Soviet) - in 1968- neighbours.

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[385]See for example Judy Batt, *Czecho-Slovakia in transition: From Federation to Separation* (London; The Royal Institute of International affairs, discussion paper n°65; 1996), pp.26-27.

[386]Jiří Pehe, "The Czech-Slovak currency split", *RFE/RL, Research report*, vol.2, n°10, 5 March 1993, pp.27-32; Dedek, *The Break-up*, pp.117-142.

[387]Leff, *The Czech*, p.256. The renegotiated agreements went into effect on 1 February 1995 (Jiří Pehe, "The choice between Europe and provincialism", *Transition*, 14 July 1995, p.15).

[388]Viva Ona Bartkus, *The Dynamic of Secession* (Cambridge; Cambridge University Press; 1999), p.22

[389]Barry Buzan, *People, States and Fear: An Agenda for International Security Studies in the Post-Cold War Era* (New York, Toronto; Harvester Wheatsheaf; 1991, 2nd edition), p.7

Czechoslovakia was undoubtedly a small state[390], but both the Czech republic with its 10.3 million inhabitants and Slovakia with its 5.3 millions appear even smaller in relation with immediate neighbours such as Poland (38.6 millions), Ukraine (51.8 millions) and Germany (80.9 millions), and this even if they can compare with countries such as Hungary (10.2 millions) or Austria (7.9 millions)[391].

However, the end of the Cold War provoked a change in the definition of security and has been characterised by the loss of salience of military issues[392]. For Czechs and Slovaks, this meant that the two nations could claim a place in the international community with better security insurances than ever before[393].
Most importantly, small states can now hope to ensure their security through defence guarantees provided by organisations of collective security such as NATO. Thus, Josef Ktrba, a member of Klaus's Civic Democratic Party, argued in June 1992 that

> the borders here [i.e, in the Czech Republic] are stable. There are some (unfounded) fears of German claims, but the cooperation with NATO and the European Community is, in view of these demands, a much more efficient defence than an unstable confederal partner [i.e, Slovakia][394].

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[390]Gabriel Sheffer for instance defines a small state as a state with a population of "up to 15 million inhabitants" (Gabriel Sheffer, "The Security of Small States: A Counter Neo-Realist Argument", in Efraim Inbar and Gabriel Sheffer (eds), *The National Security of Small States in a Changing World* (London, Portland; Frank Cass; 1997), p.10.

[391]Figures in *Financial Times*, Thursday July 17 1997, p.3; *The military balance 1994-1995* (London; International Institute for Strategic studies; 1994; pp.49-52, 80-81, 103-105) (for Austria, Germany, Ukraine)

[392]However, some scholars, mainly in the realist stream of thought, insist on the lasting salience of military power (cf for example John Garnett, *Contemporary strategy*; 2nd edition; London; Croom Helm; 1987; pp.71-90, as reproduced in Richard Little and Michael Smith (ed.), *Perspectives on World Politics*; London, New York; Routledge; 1991; pp.69-83). For a general discussion, see Ken Booth and Nicholas Wheeler, "Contending philosophies about security in Europe", in Colin McInnes (ed.), *Security and Strategy in the New Europe* (London, New York; Routledge; 1992), pp.21-23.

[393]It has been argued that during the Cold War, small states were able to play one great power against the other to their advantage, but the experience of Czechoslovakia, assigned after the Yalta and Postdam conferences to the Soviet sphere of influence, contradicts this.

[394]Josef Ktrba, "Not to a confederation", *The Prague Post*, 23-29 June 1992, p.12, quoted in Wehrlé, *Le Divorce*, p.36.

The diminishing relevance of military issues considerably decreased the cost of separation and lessened the value of Czechoslovakia as a state and security-provider. This made the establishment of two separate Czech and Slovak nation-states viable.

Less and less military, security is fast becoming more and more economic.
This is especially relevant to the Czechoslovak context, and the previous chapter has shown that economic debates were at the core of the dissolution of Czechoslovakia. The economic advantages of the common state for the Czechs and Slovaks were long perceived to outweigh its disadvantages - and this, despite the occasional Slovak accusations of internal colonialism and the reciprocal Czech complaints of Slovak ingratitude. However, in a world which becomes more and more "global", small states increasingly become a credible and even attractive economic proposition. The Czech leadership largely played up the economic risk of maintaining an union with the more "backward" Slovaks, and the Slovaks argued that becoming independent would allow the adoption of economic policies more sensitive to national economic interests.
The technological revolution has changed the rules of the game and reduced the role of "size" as a measure of the economic potential of a country:

> [t]he emergence of supra-national institutions and concerns, the progress of information science and the ongoing convergence of general codes of behaviour, the penetration of countless links, the environment problem -all this creates an inter-dependent model of international relations. Economic and social globalization is inevitably reflected in international politics. In this 'new' world, where mere physical strength no longer plays such a pronounced role, a smaller state can find it easier to assert itself and to stand out[395].

[395]Otto Pick, "The Czech republic in the world", *Perspectives*, n°8, summer 1997 (Institute of International relations, Prague), p.10.

As Peter J. Katzenstein demonstrated, notions such as economies of scale and scope are now rendered obsolete by concepts such as flexibility or capacity of innovation.[396] In statecraft just as in marketing, "small is beautiful" (and one feels tempted to add, "fashionable").

Provided the models for the new Czech and Slovak republics are countries such as Austria, Switzerland, or the Scandinavian states, this could be a factor favouring the establishment of two independent states in place of the former Czechoslovak federation . The successor states of Czechoslovakia benefit from a highly skilled and educated workforce, especially at the technical and scientific level[397], and this could further enhance their claims to prosperity, at least on the long run[398].

From a political point of view, globalisation ("a social process in which the constraints of geography on social and cultural arrangements recede and in which people become increasingly aware that they are receding")[399] has also introduced new elements facilitating the independence of the Czech republic and Slovakia.

The *global* has reinforced the *national* at the expense of the state, and the somewhat paradoxical links established by Czech and Slovak politicians between the advocacy of autonomy and/or independence and the ideal of the "return to Europe" have to be understood in this context. More specifically, the European Community (later, European Union) became, as Pavel Baev put it, a centre of gravity for secessionist movements[400].

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[396]Peter J. Katzenstein, *Small States in World Markets: Industrial Policy in Europe* (Ithaca and London; Cornell University Press; 1985). See also chapter 3; Josef C.Brada, "Breaking up", pp.17-31; Michael Keating, *Nations Against State: The New Politics of Nationalism in Quebec, Catalonia and Scotland* (London and Basingstoke; Macmillan Press; 1996), p.57.

[397]Pick, "The Czech", p.10; Dušan Novotný, *Une dangereuse méprise ou comment la République Tchèque, le meilleur élève de Moscou, est devenue le vrai-faux meilleur élève de l'Occident* (Paris; Gil Wern Editions; 1996), pp.14, 33-34, 132-134; Sharon Wolchik, "The Czech Republic and Slovakia", in Zoltan Barany and Ivan Volgyes (eds), *The legacies of communism in Eastern Europe* (Baltimore; The John Hopkins University Press; 1995), p.173.

[398]Even if one could argue that the economic orientation taken by the two successor states still relies far too heavily on traditional, often non-modernised or non-restructured economic sectors, such as mechanical or steel industry in Slovakia (Adrian Smith, "L'atout régional", *Politique Internationale* (special issue on Slovakia), n°78, Hiver 1997-1998, pp.66-67). Dušan Novotný, in its iconoclastic assessment of the post-communist Czech republic, contends that the necessary restructurings have not been made yet (*Une dangereuse,* .pp.115-116). See also "Klaus eats humble pie", *Business Week*, June 16 1997, pp.22-23).

[399]Malcom Waters, *Globalization* (London and New York; Routledge; 1995), p.3

[400]Pavel K.Baev, *Russia's Policies in Secessionist Conflicts in Europe in the 1990s* (Oslo; The Norwegian Atlantic Committee; Security Policy Library n°11/1998,), p.5 and 12.

Typical of this changing outlook is for instance Čarnogurský 's declaration in the first semester of 1990 that Slovakia "would rather meet the challenge of [European] integration as an autonomous entity than through Czechoslovakia's mediation" and should aim by 2000 to have its own European "star" and grow into "a sovereign and equal" entity[401]. Similarly, Jozef Horský, deputy chairman of the Slovak National party, declared that "[Slovaks] want to enter the EC as an independent, sovereign state with no commitments to Prague"[402]. Mečiar contended in September 1991 that "the time has come for the Slovak Republic to demand its right to self-determination and achieve sovereignty", adding that "[p]ostponing this matter is a grave political mistake that will leave Slovakia outside an integrated Europe"[403].

Slovak attitudes were strikingly reminiscent of the strategies of other "secessionist" movements such as the Basque National Party (whose leader, Xabier Arzallus keeps in his office an EU flag with thirteen stars and contends that the Basques "can find [their] way to Europe not through Spain, but as Basques)[404] or the Scottish National Party (which purports to establish "Scotland in Europe")[405]. Yet there is a major difference between autonomist or regionalist movements in Western Europe and Czech and Slovak separatist rhetoric. The dialectic fragmentation of a state/integration into a supra-national European Union was even more fatal in Czechoslovakia than anywhere else, for at least two reasons.

Firsly, the Czechoslovak state was of course a recent political construction in comparison to Spain, the United Kingdom or even Germany and Italy.

Secondly, in a globalised world economy, Czechoslovakia had become too small to affect terms of trade and the attraction of union for Czechs and Slovaks was thus considerably reduced. The cost of secession from countries such as France, Germany or the United Kingdom, who still command "comparatively influential positions *vis-à-vis* their trading

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401 Peter Martin, "The hyphen controversy", *RFE/RL*, April 20 1990, vol.1, n°16, p.17; Theodore Draper, "The end of Czechoslovakia", *The New York review of Books*, 28 January 1993, p.22

402 Terence Roth, "Nationalist Fervor Gains Among Slovaks", *Wall Street Journal*, 20/11/90.

403 Quoted in Jan Obrman, "Further Discussions on the Future of the Federation", *Radio Free Europe*, September 20, 1991, pp.8-9.

404 Bartkus, *The Dynamic*, p.198; David Sadler, "The State Level: The Nation-State in Europe, east and west", in G. Wyn Rees (ed.), *International Politics in Europe: The New Agenda* (London, New York; Routledge; 1993), p.46.

405 Edward Mortimer, "Scotland on the Danube river", *Financial Times*, 6 November 1991

partners" (and have a decisive impact on EU policies) is far higher than the cost of leaving Czechoslovakia[406].

"Returning to Europe" consequently implied for the Slovaks the accession to independence, and was a condition of it. As Mečiar made clear,

> [w]hat is being decided at the end of the 20th century in Europe is the question of which nations will remain merely regional nations, and which will become state-creating nations. The Slovaks wish to become a state-creating nation[407].

According to Emil Komarik, "states alone are accepted into Europe and if we do not get in it as a State, we will have the same legal status as the Gypsies"[408]. This somewhat schizophrenic confusion between the advocacy of a logic of disintegration (the need to divide the Czechoslovak state to achieve independent statehood) and a logic of integration (the ultimate goal to go "back to Europe") is problematic and bound to negatively affect the process of definition of the Slovak "national interests", indispensable to the elaboration of a coherent foreign policy.

Another Slovak argument was the need for international recognition and "visibility". Characteristically, on 19 November 1989, two days after the beginning of the "velvet revolution", the British newspaper *Sunday Telegraph* published an article entitled "Czechs' last show trial proves a crowd-puller". Perhaps to the surprise of the more attentive reader, the trial to which the article was referring did not however take place in Prague and no Czech was standing in the dock: the "*Czechs*' show trial" was the trial in front of a Bratislava court of five prominent *Slovak* dissidents. This example, in itself insignificant, was nevertheless illustrative of the assimilation of "Czechoslovak" to "Czech", and the ignorance of the external world vis-à-vis Slovakia became a highly symbolic and emotional issue. "Just as

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[406]Bartkus, *The Dynamic*, pp.176 and 196.

[407]quoted in M.Kraus, "Returning", p.241.

[408]"Federalné tahanice", *Slovenský národ*, 29/1990, 1 December 1990, quoted in Stanislav J.Kirschbaum, "Les Slovaques et le droit des peuples à disposer d'eux-mêmes: à la recherche d'une solution", in André Liebich and André Reszler (eds), *L'Europe centrale et ses minorités: vers une solution européenne* (Paris; Presses Universitaires de France; 1993), p.99.

Scotsmen and Welshmen resent being called English, many Slovaks objected to the way Czech was used both in the Czech Lands and internationally as an abbreviation for Czechoslovak", and the electoral platform of Public Against Violence significantly stated in 1990 that

> in the interest of both partners, it is important to make sure that "Czech" is not identified with "Czecho-Slovak", but that like "Slovak" in "Czecho-Slovak" it only makes up a part[409].

It explains why Slovak deputies in the Federal Assembly launched the "hyphen war" or why the Slovak government unilaterally established in June 1990 a Commission on Foreign Policy (which later became a full-fledged ministry for International Relations led by Milan Kňažko, an influential political figure). The Czech government subsequently created its own office for international affairs in March 1992, but the range of its activities remained far less developed than its Slovak counterpart, which disposed from a budget nine times more important and already counted by early 1992 over 90 staff members[410].

Generally therefore, the international environment appeared more supportive than ever to Czech and Slovak aspirations to independence. The decline of the relevance in security terms of the idea of territorial integrity also made it easier for the (if only numerically) dominant Czechs to accept the "amputation" of the Czechoslovak state[411] and Vladimír Reisky argues that the Czechs were too inhibited by the concept of self-determination to campaign against Slovak independence[412]. Furthermore, the apparent absence of hostile foreign

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[409]Koordinacné centrum hnutia Verejnost' proti násilu, *Šanca pre Slovensko* , Bratislava 1990, p.6 quoted in Sigurd Hilde, "Slovak Nationalism", p.654.

[410]M.Kraus, "Returning", pp.237-239.

[411]See for instance Ola Tunander, "Post-Cold War Europe: Synthesis of a Bipolar Friend-Foe Structure and a Hierarchic Cosmos-Chaos Structure ?", in Ola Tunander, Pavel Baev and Victoria Ingrid Einagel (eds), *Geopolics in Post-Wall Europe: Security, Territory And Identity* (London, Thousand Oaks; SAGE Publications; International Peace Research Institute, Oslo; 1997), p.34.

[412]Vladimír Reisky, "Identity Crisis in the Czech Republic", in Kenneth W. Thompson (ed.), *Revolutions in Eastern Europe and the U.S.S.R: Promises vs. Practical Morality* (London, New York; Lanham, University Press of America; 1995), p.111

("great power") involvement in the ethnopolitics of Czechoslovakia was a rare occurrence in a region traditionally bitterly disputed.

The break-up of Czechoslovakia in the light of Czech and Slovak "national interests"

It appears however necessary at this stage to turn to a more specific analysis of the case for the division from the Slovak and Czech standpoints. Czech and Slovak elites, purporting to defend the "national interests", exploited the changing international environment to put forward a more or less explicitly secessionist agenda[413].

If the national interest is "a set of strategic requirements of the state based on its geographic situation, historical experience and on its relations to other centers of power"[414], after 1989, given the absence of external constraints, the pragmatic considerations (examined in the first chapter) at the roots of the merging of the two nations in a common state in 1918 suddenly looked increasingly irrelevant, and indeed unsustainable in the post Cold War world.

The Slovak standpoint

In 1967, Rapant argued that

> [the Slovaks] are a small nation who could stay alive, and which will stay alive in the future, only if it continues a cautious policy and carefully chooses its partners, at least for as long as the international law does not develop to the point at which the

[413]The role of the elites is examined in more details in chapters 6 and 7.

[414]Oskar Krejčí, *Czechoslovak national interests: a historical survey of Czechoslovak national interests and reflections on the demise of Czechoslovak communism* (Boulder, East European Monographs; New York, Columbia University Press; 1996), p.19. For a realist perspective on the notion of "national interest", see W. David Clinton, "The national interest: normative foundations", *The review of politics* (Notre Dame), vol.48, n°4, 1986, pp.495-519.

independent existence could be both guaranted and effectively ensured for the smaller nations[415].

After the fall of the communist regime in 1989, partly thanks to the systemic changes in the international system examined earlier, many felt that there was at last a genuine historical chance for the Slovak nation to achieve statehood on its own and become for the first time "visible" on the international stage.

According to nationalistically-oriented Slovak intellectuals such as Jozef Mikuš[416], Stanislav Kirschbaum[417], Milan Ďurica or Matus Kučera[418], the achievement of independence in January 1993 was the long-awaited and logical re-establishment of a Slovak state in Europe. The use of the word "re-establishment" is significant, since it supported the (dubious)[419] claim that the Great Moravian empire, which collapsed under Magyar invasion in the ninth century, was the first Slovak state.

Behind this sense of "history", two ambiguities lie at the core of the Slovak definition of the "national interest".

The first problem is the dialectic fragmentation/integration considered earlier, the second, the avowed dream of many Slovak politicians to make from their country a "bridge"[420] between the Western and the Slavic world[421].

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[415]Daniel Rapant, " Slováci v dejinách", pp.28-38, quoted in Wehrlé, *Le divorce*, pp.26-27.

[416]Joseph A.Mikuš, *la Slovaquie dans le drame de l'Europe: histoire politique de 1918 à 1950* (Paris; Les Iles d'Or; 1955), p.16; see also Joseph A. Mikuš and Renée Perréal, *La Slovaquie: une nation au coeur de l'Europe* (Lausanne; L'Age d'Homme; 1992).

[417]Stanislav J.Kirschbaum, *Slovaques et Tchèques,* pp.34-41

[418]Matus Kucera, "Quand l'histoire nous rapproche", *Politique internationale*, n°78, winter 1997-1998 (special issue on Slovakia), pp.32-33.

[419]For a refutation of the view of Great Moravia as a purely Slovak state, see for example Bernard Michel, "Les racines historiques de l'indépendance slovaque", *Revue d'Europe Centrale*, tome 1, n°2, 2nd semester 1993 (special issue on the end of Czechoslovakia), p.121 ; R.W Seton-Watson, *A history of the Czechs and Slovaks*, pp.12-14 and 250 ; William V. Wallace, *Czechoslovakia* (London; Ernest Benn; 1977), pp.1-2.

[420]See for example Jeffrey Simon, "Czechoslovakia's 'velvet divorce'", p.482-486.

The idea of a "bridge" was already entertained for Czechoslovakia by Beneš during World War II until it proved unsustainable in front of Stalin's policies in Eastern Europe, and came effectively to an end during the Prague coup in February 1948[422]. Jan Masaryk, son of the "president-liberator" and foreign minister from 1945 to 1948, once remarked that, while in peace time a bridge is full of traffic jams, in war time, it is the first thing that gets blown up[423]. The notion of bridge is superficial and no more realistic nowadays than in 1945-1948 - and this even if Slovakia does not face any immediate or obvious security threats at the moment (notably, Václav Klaus rejected the notion of a "bridge" as far as Czech national interests were concerned and was adamant on the unambiguous link of the state with the West[424]).

Slovakia has some legitimate interests in the maintenance of political and especially economic relations with its eastern neighbours like Russia and Ukraine, but it is only one part of a broader picture. The Slovak elite, since the last century and the beginnings of the Slovak national "awakening", has always tended to be split in two, between the Westernisers and the more Slavophile-oriented leaders. Jeffrey Simon pointed out the contradictions between "two competing security visions", one "western" (whose main representant was the former foreign minister Milan Kňažko) and one "eastern", which often supported the idea of a Slovak "neutrality"[425].

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[421]Hélène Carrère d'Encausse, "La Slovaquie et l'Europe", *Politique Internationale*, n°78, Winter 1997-98, p.21. The idea is also entertained in Ukraine, for instance (see Anna Reid, *Borderland: A Journey Through the History of Ukraine*; London; Phoenix; 1998; p.229).

[422]cf for example his Memoirs (*Memoirs of Dr Eduard Beneš*, pp.281-286). To be fair, František Palacký already argued in his History of the Czech Nation in Bohemia and Moravia that the Czech lands were "a bridge between Germandom and Slavdom, between the East and West in Europe in general" (*Dejiny národa ceského v Cechách a na Morave*,1848, 1876 edn, p.3, quoted in Peter Bugge, "The Use of the Middle: *Mitteleuropa* vs. *Stredni Evropa*", *European Review of History*, vol.6, n°1, Spring 1999, p.20)

[423]Marès, *Histoire*, p.312 ; Zbynek Zeman, *The Masaryks : The Making of Czechoslovakia* (London; Weidenfeld and Nicolson; 1976), p.197.

[424]Batt, *Czecho-Slovakia in transition,* p.28.

[425]J.Simon, "Czechoslovakia's 'velvet divorce'", p.485.

The Czech standpoint

As in Slovakia, many Czech politicians, especially within the Civic democratic Party, considered that the post-Cold war international environment made possible the independent existence of the Czech Republic.

The Czech elite was increasingly prepared to accept the division of the federation and the establishment of a homogenous Czech state since Slovakia was perceived as a burden, which would prevent the Czechs from managing a quick and smooth "return to Europe": as indicated in chapter 2, reasoning such as "alone to Europe or together in the Balkans" became widespread in Czech media. It was assumed that the Czechs did not need anymore to accommodate Slovak "national interests" and could start to define their own Czech interests, perceived as different from the Czechoslovak "state interests":

> [t]he insurance policy Slovakia offered the Czechs at Versailles turned out to be the time bomb of 1939, a determining factor in the post-1968 normalization, and eventually the key to the 1993 disintegration[426].

As opposed to Slovak leaders, Czech politicians and elites unambiguously defined the (re)integration to the West as their absolute priority.

Several reasons could explain this major difference of orientations between Czech and Slovak foreign policies: the distinct economic conditions and, above all, political cultures, were reflected in a divergent definition of the national interests of the two nations. However, as the chapters 2 and 3 of this dissertation tried to make clear, one should probably look for another explanation: the next section shows how, on concrete issues, Czech and Slovak national interests began to clash after 1989.

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[426]Caroline Bayard, "The changing character of the Prague intelligentsia", *Telos*, N° 94, Winter 1993-1994, p.141. See also Leff, *National conflict*, p.275.

The impossibility for Czechs and Slovaks to define a common security agenda after 1989 ?

In the post-communist era, the "national interests" of the Czechs and Slovaks were probably too contradictory to allow them to agree easily on the specific "state interests" of a Czechoslovak state. The international environment thus significantly contributed to reinforce the political-cultural and economic divides between the two nations.

The best example of this is the controversy surrounding the "ethical" decision of the first post-communist Czechoslovak foreign minister Jiří Dienstbier to halt arms exports. He announced in January 1990 to the *New York Times* that "Czechoslovakia will simply end its trade in arms without taking into account what the pragmatists will say"[427]- a position that was bound to severely affect the arms industry, mostly based in Slovakia and was heavily criticised by Slovak leaders[428]. In the spring of 1991, the sale by the Slovak government of T-72 tanks to Syria provoked a debate between the federal and the Slovak republican authorities, but in April, the Czechoslovak government agreed to back down, when during an offical visit to Israel, Marian Čalfa, the federal prime minister and himself a Slovak, declared that

> [t]anks are the same kind of goods as anything else and one of the few products we can sell in the world. This is why we are going to sell to anybody[429].

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[427] *The New York Times*, 25 January 1990 (quoted in Kraus, "Returning", p.227)

[428] See Chapter 3 for more informations on the economic consequences of the decision; See also Martin Plichta, "La Tchécoslovaquie relance ses exportations d'armes", *Le Monde*, 17 January 1991; Jacqueline Hénard, "Was versteht ein Minister aus Prag von Panzertechnik ?", *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 6 June 1991.

[429] Susan Greenberg, "Minister grapples with tank-makers in lion's den", *The Guardian*, 7 April 1991 ; See also Peter Martin, "Economic reform and Slovakia", *RFE/RL*, July 5 1991, vol.2, N°27, pp.10 and 13 ; Michael Kraus, *op.cit.*, pp.227-228 ; Paulina Bren, "Converting military industries: conversion slows down as Czechs and Slovaks part", *RFE / RL*, vol.1, n°32, 14 August 1992, pp.38-43.

In this context, chapter 3 shed light on the separate economic interests of Czechs and Slovaks but the two nations also have different interests (and therefore foreign policies) because, to put it pragmatically, they find themselves in different strategic and geopolitical situations.

From a geographic point of view, the creation of a new border between the Czech and the Slovak republics has some concrete -and opposite- implications for the prospects of the new states.
The Czech Republic, which has 62 percent of its 1300-border with Germany and Austria, seems in a more favourable position than Slovakia, which shares only 5,9 percent of its border with a Western country (Austria). As Jeffrey Simon concludes, after the separation with Slovakia, "the Czech republic's ties to the West have been significantly enhanced"[430].

For more than four decades, Czech and Slovak relations were indeed constrained by Soviet domination and separation was not an option. It would have faced the opposition of the Soviet Union, which had already in 1945 put an end to the calls of some Slovak communists (such as Julius Ďuriš and especially Ján Osoha) for the creation of a Slovak Socialist republic part of the USSR or an independent "Soviet" ("Red") Slovakia[431].
By 1989, however, the velvet revolution was largely staged as a show of Czech and Slovak unity against communism, now perceived as a Soviet/Russian import, and the former Big Brother[432] had lost its ability to inspire fear. One of the first concerns of the post-communist Czechoslovak foreign policy was to negotiate the withdrawal of Soviet troops from the state, and the last Soviet soldier eventually left Czechoslovakia in June 1991[433]. As President Havel declared in an address to a joint session of the US Congress in February 1990, the Czechs and the Slovaks have a vital interest in the establishment and the maintenance of

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[430]J.Simon, "Czechoslovakia's 'velvet divorce'", pp.483-486.

[431]See for instance Jelinek, *The Lust for Power*, pp.35-77; Zdenek L.Suda, *Zealots and Rebels: A History of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia* (Stanford; Stanford University; 1980), p.160 and 169.

[432]See Hélène Carrère d'Encausse, *Le Grand Frère: L'Union Soviétique et l'Europe Soviétisée* (Paris; Flammarion; 1983).

[433]The "temporary" presence of Soviet forces on Czechoslovak territory was officially formalised by a bilateral treaty on 16 October 1968 (see text of the agreement in Jaromír Navrátil (ed.), *The Prague Spring 1968: A National Security Archive Documents Reader*; Budapest; Central European University Press; 1998), pp.533-536).

democracy in Russia[434]. This was dramatically confirmed at the occasion of the failed putsch of August 1991, but the Soviet Union and its most important successor state, Russia, were no longer perceived by Czechs and Slovaks as constituting an immediate security threat in *military* terms[435].

In line with the post-Cold War redefinition of security, the risk of more indirect menaces was nevertheless taken seriously. Were the countries of the former Soviet bloc to fall into a political and economic chaos, given their geographical positions and their relatively favourable economic conditions, Czechs and Slovaks were prepared to face important immigration waves of refugees. The Czechoslovak government estimated in December 1990 that from one to eight million citizens of the former Soviet Union could flood into the country and represent a serious *economic* threat to Czech and Slovak security[436]. Czechoslovak policy-makers were also concerned about the country becoming a transit route in the international drug trade (according to some estimates, in 1991, between 80 and 85 percent of drugs for Western Europe transited via the Czech and Slovak Federative republic[437]).

The international environment had thus by 1989 considerably changed for Czechs and Slovaks, even if in some respects, the legacy of the past was a decisive element of the break-up -especially as far as Czech-German and Slovak-Hungarian relations are concerned.

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[434]Václav Havel' s address to the United States Congress, Washington, 21 February 1990, quoted in Wehrlé, *Le Divorce*,p.24.

[435]In January 1992, Eugen Gindl, a founder of Public Against Violence, however expressed his concern about the independence of Ukraine, arguing that "[t]he emergence of Ukraine is the strongest argument against an independent Slovakia" (Nick Thorpe, "Hopes for Slovak independence fall as Ukraine rises", *The Observer*, 2 January 1992).

[436]Francis Harris, "Soviet border to stay shut until spring", *The Daily Telegraph*, O6/12/1990 ; Peter Green, "Czechoslovakia braces itself for invasion of Soviet migrants", *The Times*, 24/12/1990, p.6 ; *Reuter*, 18 December 1990 ("Czechoslovaks fear refugee wave, increase Soviet border guards")and 30 December 1990 ("Czechoslovakia expects transit of one million Soviet refugees"). The migration never however became the threat that was anticipated (Rogers Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed : Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe*; Cambridge; Cambridge University Press; 1996; p.150; Jan Urban, "The Czech and Slovak Republics", p.116). As an aside, it should be reminded that, during the interwar period, the democratic First republic had attracted a significant number of refugees from the oppressive German, Hungarian and Soviet regimes.

[437]Institute for International Relations (Prague), *Czech national interests: contribution to a discussion* (1993), p.49

Back to the past ?

Most significantly, the end of the Cold War had an adverse impact on Czech-Slovak relations, because Czechs and Slovaks went back to their traditional foes - respectively Germany and Hungary.
This further emphasized the two nations's divergent priorities, "impinged upon and complicated their mutual relationship inside the federation as well"[438].

The Czechs and reunified Germany

The Czechs have been associated during seven decades with the Slovaks but the nation with whom the Czechs have been far more often linked throughout their history is undeniably Germany. The history of the Czech nation has often been taken to mean the history of the struggle of the Czechs to assert their identity in front of German power and *Drang nach Osten*. This reading of Czech history, for example developed by František Palacký[439], appears of course somewhat unilateral and has had to face the criticism of other eminent scholars such as Josef Pekař[440], but force is to admit that the relations of the Czechs with their bigger and more powerful neighbours are a constant in Czech history. In Václav Havel's words,

> [O]ur [the Czechs] relationship to Germany and the Germans has been more than merely one of the themes of our diplomacy. It has been a part of our destiny, even a part of our identity. Germany has been our inspiration as well as our pain; a source of understandable traumas, of many prejudices and misconceptions, as well as of the standards to which we turn: some regard Germany as our greatest hope, others as our

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[438]M.Kraus, "Returning", p.230.

[439]Adrian Hyde-Price, *The international politics of East Central Europe* (Manchester, New York; Manchester University Press; 1996), p.206

[440]On these two divergent conceptions of Czech history, see chapter 2 and Ladislav Holy, *The little*, pp.114-137.

greatest peril. It can be said that the attitude they take toward Germany and the Germans has been a factor by which the Czechs define themselves, both politically and philosophically[441].

One of the prerequisites for the establishment of a Czech state in 1993 was the disparition of "the favored bogeyman before 1918 - fear of the Germans"[442] and by 1989-1992, two factors had led to a reassessment of the self-definition of the Czechs vis-à-vis the Germans.

Firstly, since 1945, there is no significant German minority in the Czech lands anymore[443]: according to the 1991 census, there were 48,556 Germans (i.e a mere 0.47 percent of the population) living in the republic[444]. This is the consequence of the decision of the Czechoslovak authorities after World War II to expel the German minority, accused to have been Hitler's accomplice in his design to break up the first republic. This is significant because, in the homogenous Czech republic, such tactics could not be possible again and the security of the state would not be dependent on the necessity to appease German "pretensions".

Secondly, and more importantly, the perception of Germany among the Czech elite has fundamentally changed. Germany is now a democratic state, whose *Ostpolitik* is based on the establishment of peaceful and constructive relations with its smaller post-communist eastern neighbours.

As a consequence, post-communist Czech leaders overwhelmingly favoured the development of cooperation with Germany. Havel himself is the most-outspoken and consistent tenant of this attitude, and his first official visit as president of Czechoslovakia was in Germany in January 1990, where he expressed his support for German reunification, according to the principle that "Germany can be as large as she wants to, as long as she stays democratic"[445].

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[441] quoted in Steve Kettle, "Burying the hatchet ?", *Transition*, 28 April 1995, p.26.

[442] Bayard, "The changing ", p.134.

[443] Batt, *Czecho-Slovakia in Transition*, p.25.

[444] O. Krejčí, *Czechoslovak national interests*, p.5

[445] quoted in Hyde-Price, *The International*, p.207.

However, this a priori idyllic picture hides a more disturbing reality as far as the Czechs are concerned. Czech relations with Germany will remain asymmetrical: given the redefinition of security seen earlier and the integration of Germany into Western structures, the military imbalance is of decreasing relevance but economic relations are marked by a wide disequilibrium.

Despite the Czech elite's positive attitude to Germany, concerns about the risk of German economic "neo-colonialism" or the danger of becoming the sixth new Bundesland of the unified German state, started to be commonly voiced among the Czech population[446] and opinion polls realised just before German reunification show that 45 percent of the Czechs still perceived a united Germany as a threat to Czech security (even if 46 percent disagreed). Similarly, 44 percent considered the unification as a threat to Europe and 29 percent believed it to be susceptible to be a threat for the whole world[447].
Germany does not present a direct and immediate threat to the security of the Czech republic but the sheer power of the German state could have at least unintended effects on its small eastern neighbour. The Czechs face the "risk of a possible diminution of [their] identity under strong German influence"[448] and the break-up of Czechoslovakia has in this respect to be regarded as a factor which has decreased the security prospects of the Czech nation. As a publication of the Institute for International Relations in Prague remarks,

> [t]he most evident features of the new geo-political situation of the Czech Republic, as against former Czechoslovakia, is the increased potential role of the German factor in its political, economic and cultural development.[449]

In a more alarmist way, Marian Čalfa noted:

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[446]Wehrlé, *Le divorce*, p.32. However, many Czechs also thought that "the only thing worse than being dominated by the German economy is not being dominated by it" (quoted in Adrian Hyde-Price, *ibid.*, p.207)

[447]Figures in O. Krejčí, *Czechoslovak national interests,* p.175

[448]IIR Prague, *Czech national interests*, p.24

[449]*ibid.*, p.53. Interestingly, the same report, quoted earlier, was thoroughly optimistic about Czech-German relations: this would seem in fact rather characteristic of Czech ambivalence towards its Western neighbour.

> [B]ohemia has a giant economic conglomerate close to its western borders. Who knows if there exists something stronger than the two German states, and there is Austria at the south -all this is a Germanic territory. After all, the Czechs have their own experiences with germanisation. In other words, the division of Czechoslovakia in Czech lands and Slovakia is the beginning of the end for the Czech lands and Slovakia[450].

It has been argued, citing the example of Canada and the United States, that asymmetry need not be threatening[451]. However, unlike Canadian-American relations, the relations between Czechs and Germans are characterised by a deep historical ambivalence. Havel, during a visit of Chancellor Kohl in Prague in February 1992, presented the French-German reconciliation as the model to follow:

> We are, Germans and us [Czechs] in front of the same problem that French and Germans after the war. The ideas and the fruits of the work of Jean Monnet, Robert Schuman and Konrad Adenauer must represent a source of permanent inspiration for us...[452].

Yet, reconciliations, as Timothy Garton Ash pointed out, are far easier when the two nations are of approximately equal size and, in this context, the Czech vision of Germany is bound to be marked in the foreseable future by continuing misunderstandings and suspicions[453].

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[450]Marian Čalfa, *Mladá Fronta*, 21 August 1990, p.3, quoted in F.Wehrlé, *Le divorce*, pp.29-30.

[451]James H.Wyllie, *European Security in the New Political Environment: An Analysis of the Relationships between National Interests, International Institutions and the Great Powers in post-Cold War European security Arrangements* (London and New York; Longman; 1997), p.10. Even if anti-Americanism seems to hold an important place in Canadian political culture (see for instance, J.L Granatstein, *Yankee Go Home ?: Canadians and Anti-Americanism*; Toronto; HarperCollins; 1996; Ronald G. Landes, *The Canadian Polity: A Comparative Introduction*; Scarborough; Prentice Hall Canada; third edition, 1991; pp.246-249).

[452]Václav Havel, *L'angoisse de la liberté* (La Tour d'Aigues; Editions de l'Aube; 1994), p.218

[453]Timothy Garton Ash, *In Europe's Name: Germany and the Divided Continent* (London; Vintage Books; 1994), pp.309-311; see also Lily Gardner Feldman, "The principle and practice of 'reconciliation' in German foreign policy : relations with France, Israel, Poland and the Czech Republic, *International Affairs*, vol.75, n°2 (1999),pp.333-356.

Most importantly, Czech-German relations had a negative effect on Czech- Slovak relations, and exacerbated tensions between the two nations.

Apart from the (unproved and probably unfounded) rumours that Germany financed Slovak secessionist movements, the controversies which surrounded the signature of a Czechoslovak-German treaty in 1991 and 1992 (the treaty was ultimately ratified by the federal assembly on 22 April 1992) did little to improve Czech and Slovak relations.

Firstly, before a planned visit of the German president Richard von Weizsäcker in Prague, Ján Čarnogurský and František Mikloško addressed in September 1991 a letter to Jiří Diensbier contesting one sentence of the treaty preamble which acknowledged the continuity of the Czechoslovakia since 1918, and thus, according to Slovak leaders, repudiated Munich, but also the legal existence of the Slovak state between 1939 and 1945:

> We cannot credibly demand from today's parliament to act constitutionally, when at the same time the constitutionality of the decisions of the past is denied.

The moves of the two Slovak leaders provoked indignation in the Czech side, and the Czech prime minister Petr Pithart condemned the "lack of sensibility with regard to the Czech people, which experienced under the German protectorate one of the most difficult periods of its history, while Slovakia [the Slovaks] had it better than any other people in Europe".[454]

Secondly, after the signature of the treaty and his (re)election as Slovak prime minister in June 1992, Vladimír Mečiar, to the dismay of the Czechs, unilaterally proposed during talks with Bavarian *Ministerpräsident* Max Streibl in September, to offer compensations for Carpathian Germans expelled from Slovakia after the Second World War[455].

Finally, on 14 October 1992, when Mečiar controversially declared in front of the Bundestag that "[o]ur country [i.e, Slovakia] always did well, whenever we had good relations with

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[454]Karl-Peter Schwartz, "Vertrag mit CSFR droht an Slowaken zu scheitern", *Die Welt*, Thursday 19 September 1991. See also Shari J.Cohen, *Politics without a Past: The Absence of History in postcommunist nationalism* (Durham and London; Duke University Press; 1999), pp.151-152.

[455]J.Urban, "The Czech", p.107 ; The Slovak National Council had already adopted on 13 February a forceful resolution on the Carpathian Germans, which stated that "[w]e, representatives of the free and independent Slovakia, wish to enter into the community of nations with our accounts settled. We condemn the principle of collective guilt, whiever arguments are used to justify it" (Ľubomír Lipták, "Slovaquie : Une dette encombrante", in Michel Korinman (ed.), *L'Allemagne vue d'ailleurs;* Paris; Editions Balland; 1992, p.199).

Germany", the Czech press pointedly reminded its readers that "the only such time in living memory was during the Third Reich"[456].

Slovakia and Hungary

In the same way as the Germans could be said to be the traditional "Others" of the Czechs, the Hungarians are undoubtedly the nation with whom the Slovaks interacted most throughout history[457]. The union of the Slovaks with the Czechs in the Czechoslovak state founded in 1918 put an apparent end to these close relations between Slovaks and Magyars. However, even during the existence of Czechoslovakia, some conflicts periodically reemerged between the two nations. For example, during the First Republic, one of the reasons invoked by the Czechs to refuse the granting of autonomy to Slovakia was the (altogether not unfounded) fear that this would dangerously increase Hungarian revisionism, following the extremely severe conditions imposed on Hungary by the Treaty of Trianon. This was further corroborated by events such as the Tuka affair in 1929, when one of the leaders of Hlinka's Slovak populist party was trialed and jailed following the disclosure of his contacts with the Hungarian government[458].

After World War II, the Czechoslovak authorities unsuccessfully tried to negotiate with the Hungarian government a transfer to Hungary of Slovakia's Hungarian minority in exchange for the return of part of the Hungarian Slovaks. Under the communist regime, apart from a few incidents[459], the animosity between Slovaks and Hungarians seemed to have subdued. Therefore, the resurgence of certain trouble spots after 1989 appeared at first as a bad

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[456]J.Urban, "The Czech", p.107.

[457]For an account of Magyarisation, see R.W Seton-Watson (Scotus Viator), *Racial*; Paul, "Slovak nationalism", pp.115-159.

[458]Mamatey, "The development", pp.137-141; El Mallakh, *The Slovak,* pp.54-55.

[459]For an account of the treatment of the Hungarian minority in Slovakia under the communist regime, see Robert R. King, *Minorities under communism: nationalities as a source of tension among Balkan communist states* (Cambridge, Mass.; Harvard University Press; 1973), pp.109-123.

surprise: the claims of the Hungarian prime minister Jozsef Antall that he considered himself as the prime minister and the protector of 15 millions Hungarians (Hungary having only 10 million inhabitants)[460] or the emergence on the Hungarian political stage of populists such as István Csurka[461], as well as the fact that certain Slovak politicians like Vladimír Mečiar or Ján Slota, the leader of the Slovak national party, did not hesitate to play the nationalist card, clearly did not help to build confidence between the two nations.

Most significantly, Hungarian talks of the legal possibility of border changes between Slovakia and Hungary if the Slovaks seceded from Czechoslovakia, were common and two major issues soon came to dominate bilateral relations between Slovakia and Hungary: the controversy surrounding the Gabčikovo-Nagymaros dam, and more importantly, the question of the fate of the 600,000-strong Hungarian minority in a Slovak nation-state, where they constitute more than 10 percent of the population.

Like Czech-German relations, Slovak-Hungarian relations increased the tensions between Czechs and Slovaks.

Firstly, the continuous support of Hungarian parties in Slovakia for the maintenance of the Czechoslovak state between 1989 and 1992 (there were talks of an "incipient pro-federalist Czech-Hungarian alliance inside Czechoslovakia")[462] and the suggestion of prominent Czech politicians like Pithart that the Czech government might be able to arbitrate the Slovak-Hungarian disputes[463] was resented in Bratislava.

Secondly, the federal government of Prague was seen by the Slovaks as unwilling to react more strongly to Hungarian claims and to defend vigourously Slovak interests[464]. The Gabčikovo issue became for instance in the eyes of many Slovaks a matter of national pride with a deeply symbolic resonance and the perceived lukewarm character of Czech interventions in defence of the project had an adverse effect on Czech-Slovak relations.

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[460]Sharon Fisher, "Treaty fails to end squabbles over Hungarian relations", *Transition*, 9 June 1995, p.2.

[461]Szayna, "Ultra-nationalism", pp.535-538 and "The extreme right", pp.139-142.

[462]M.Kraus, "Returning", p.231.

[463] Janusz Bugajski, *Nations in turmoil: conflict and cooperation in Eastern Europe* (Boulder; Westview Press; 2nd edition, 1995), pp.80-81.

[464]M.Kraus,"Returning", pp.231-232.

The divergence of Czech and Slovak national interests between 1989 and 1992 was not historically new. The precedent of 1918, when both Czechs and Slovaks saw the creation of a common state as the best way to further their interests, has for example to be contrasted with 1935 (when the ideologically strongly "anti-Bolshevik" Slovak nationalists campaigned against the signature of the Czechoslovak-Soviet pact), 1938/39, 1948 (when communism received a much stronger support in the Czech lands than in Slovakia) and 1968 (when, following the crushing of the Prague Spring, the state became a federation).
After 1989, Czechs and Slovaks had the same avowed goal, going "back to Europe", but chose two different roads. The velvet divorce comes as a reminder that, as Stephen Shulman put it, "foreign ties symbolically or actually influence cultural characteristics and ethnic consciousness within a state, and thus foreign policy becomes a key element and an object of political contestation between groups with different visions of that identity"[465].

Conclusion

The previous discussion would a priori suggest that Czechoslovakia was an artificial state held together by external pressures.

However, security considerations (like the political cultural differences and the economic issues discussed in the previous chapters, and in spite of the rhetoric) were clearly not at the root of the break-up in 1992. Indeed, what was striking between 1989 and 1992 is in many respects the lack of serious discussion about the security consequences of the break-up of the state: "neither the Czech nor the Slovak political representation paid any significant attention to the foreign policy and security consequences of their mutual agreements or 'domestic' arrangements"[466].

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[465]Stephen Shulman, "National Integration and Foreign Policy in Multiethnic States", *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, vol.4, n°4, Winter 1998, p.124.

[466]J.Urban, "The Czech", p.101.

To be true, the "geopolitical argument" is not intrinsically flawed, since it rightly recognises and emphasises the importance of the international environment and of geopolitical constraints for the small nations of Central Europe such as the Czechs and Slovaks. However, the trouble with the "geopolitical argument" is that it was often used by Czech and Slovak politicians after 1989 to justify and legitimate the break-up of Czechoslovakia.

The security of Czechoslovakia as a state and of the Czechs and Slovaks as national entities has always depended on the stability of the balance of power in Europe[467]. The stability of post-1989 Europe is however doubtful: the realist contention that "bipolarity, an equal military balance, and nuclear weapons have fostered peace in Europe over the past 45 years" and that "the demise of the Cold War order is likely to increase the chances that war and major crises will occur in Europe"[468] makes it difficult (perhaps impossible) to argue that the split of Czechoslovakia was inevitable because of the absence of external constraints.

Without sharing the gloomy prediction of Oskar Krejčí about the "death of the Czech [and the Slovak?] nation[s]"[469], the end of Czechoslovakia nevertheless appears as a risky attempt to escape the geographical and geopolitical determinism inherent to their position - what the Hungarian writer István Bibó once termed the "misery" of small East European nations[470]. Czech and Slovak politicians who, as chapter 6 will discuss, took to a large degree the responsibility of the break-up of the state, forgot that, as Havel himself wrote,

> [w]hether in our own State or in another, we have lived, Czechs and Slovaks, in a situation of permanent threats and danger[471].

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[467]Alexander Ort, "Les conséquences internationales de la partition", in Regourd, *Etudes tchécoslovaques*, p.46.

[468]John J.Mearsheimer, "Back to the future: instability in Europe after the Cold War", *International security*, vol.15, n°1, Summer 1990, pp.51-52. For a rather different and more optimistic view, see Stephen Van Evera, "Primed for peace: Europe after the Cold War", *International security*, Winter 1990-1991, vol 15, n°3, pp.7-57.

[469]O. Krejčí, *Czechoslovak national interests*, p.177.

[470]István Bibó, *Misère des Petits Etats d'Europe de l'Est* (Paris; Albin Michel; 1993).

[471]Havel, *Summer Meditations*, p.157.

The dissolution of Czechoslovakia has not only in many ways intensified the dependence of the Czech republic on Germany or increased the possibility of a conflict between the new Slovakia and Hungary: it has also been a setback to the progress of Central European integration and has tended to internationally isolate the young Slovak state, which, under Mečiar's rule, was not included in the first waves of Nato or EU enlargement. Moreover, even the integration in these two "security-significant" organisations will not go without its problems and might not dramatically increase Czech and Slovak security prospects. As Krejčí cynically put it, it is doubtful whether Nato members can realistically be expected "to rush to the war with a nuclear superpower [Russia?] because of small Czech republic"[472]. Membership in Nato, like membership in any other alliance, cannot always be taken as a valuable guarantee of support in case of an external aggression: the Czechs, but also the Slovaks, given their tragic historical experience in 1938 in Munich, are probably in a better position than anybody else to be aware of this.

Without going as far as Kosík, who assimilates the velvet divorce to another Munich[473], it is fair to say that political realism, in many ways an essential and integral part of the legacy of Palacký and Masaryk[474] has been renounced by their post-communist heirs[475].

Contrarily to 1938-39 - as the third part of the dissertation will aim to demonstrate (by focusing on the institutional aspects of Czech-Slovak relations, the role of the post-communist elites, the resurgence of nationalism, and the legacies of communism) - Czechoslovakia broke up in 1992 for *internal* reasons.

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[472] O. Krejčí, *Czechoslovak national interests*, p.152.

[473] Kosík, "The Third Munich", pp.145-154.

[474] See TG Masaryk, *The making; The meaning of Czech history* (ed. by René Wellek; Chapel Hill; The University of North Carolina Press; 1974). Eva Schmidt-Hartmann (*Thomas G. Masaryk's Realism: Origins of a Czech Political Concept*; Munich; R.Oldenbourg Verlag; 1984; p.164) reminds that the "starting point of the [realist] programme's considerations of Czech national policies was the true meaning of the slogan 'national independence'. It considered full state independence of the Lands of the Bohemian Crowns 'impossible' because of 'our' -no doubt meaning Czech- numerical inferiority, geographical situation and the fact that the Lands were inhabited not only by the Czechs but also by Germans and Poles. Accordingly, an association with other nations and countries was considered indispensable. Moreover, the programme argued that historical developments intrinsically led to the creation of larger states which were to secure the national independence of smaller nations".

[475] Kosík, "The Third Munich", p.150. See also Antoine Marès, "Ruptures et continuités de la mémoire tchèque", *Vingtième siècle*, n°36, October-December 1992, p.80.

Elites used foreign policy to further their political (national) ambitions and the dissolution of the state had little to do with international factors and much with internal, and therefore changeable, dynamics.

PART III

CHAPTER 5
POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS, POLITICAL PARTIES AND THE BREAK-UP OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA

After having argued that political-cultural and economic differences between Czechs and Slovaks, as well as the international environment, cannot explain the velvet divorce, the third part of the dissertation suggests alternative interpretations of the break-up of Czechoslovakia. This chapter focuses on the role of political institutions and political parties in the dissolution of the state and contends that the institutional deadlock which followed the end of communism substantially impeded the resolution of tensions between Czechs and Slovaks.

A first section provides a brief account of the institutions inherited from the communist era and the implications of the federalisation of 1969.
The post-communist pluralisation of political life is examined in a second section. The democratisation had as a consequence the establishment of a political "dualism", with the Czech and Slovak party systems becoming polarised along different and sometimes contradictory axes.
The following section then considers whether the use of a referendum could have saved the Czechoslovak state, and, finally, the electoral law of 29 January 1992, which was applied to the June 1992 parliamentary elections, is used to show how institutional choices adversely affected Czech-Slovak relations, for instance by hindering the establishment of political parties bridging the national divide.

The Czechoslovak political system

Czechoslovak political institutions were created in 1918 on a centralist and unitary model. It was only in January 1969 that the country was reorganised as a federation of two republics, the Czech and Slovak republics.

Consequently, by the time of the velvet revolution of 1989, Czechoslovakia had a bicameral system, with a Chamber of the People, where the principle of proportional representation between the two republics was applied (101 Czech deputies and 49 Slovak deputies), and a Chamber of Nations, where the Czech republic and Slovakia had equal representation (75 deputies each). A complex de facto tricameral system was applied as far as votes on major constitutional issues or the election of the president, were concerned: in these cases, the Chamber of Nations was divided into a Czech and a Slovak section, which both had to approve the text. Moreover, the required majority was raised to three-fifths of the total deputies *elected* in each of the Chamber of People and in each of the two sections of the Chamber of Nations for the election of president or the adoption of constitutional laws. A very small number of deputies (31) thus had a veto power on every major law. The guiding principle behind the constitutional arrangement of 1969 was the prohibition of majority rule (what the Slovaks call *majorizácia*): despite their demographic inferiority, the Slovaks were to have an equal voice in state affairs.

The arrangement functioned under the Communist regime because the real power lay in the hands of the centralised Communist Party, but it became a disruptive factor after 1989, when Czechoslovakia had to adopt a new constitution. Somewhat paradoxically, a constitutional arrangement originally designed to maintain the unity of the state by granting what clearly amounted to an unequal representation in favour of Slovakia, provided the opponents of the maintenance of Czechoslovakia with the means to break it, once the democratisation took place. Czech and Slovak post-communist leaders recognised and agreed that the so-called socialist constitution of 1960 and the federal amendments of 1969 could not constitute the basis for the reestablishment of democracy, but they had deeply contradictory conceptions of what should replace them.

Following the parliamentary elections of June 1990, a law on the division of powers between the federal and republican governments, which alloted the republics a significant financial autonomy, was adopted in December 1990: taxation revenues from each republic now remained in the republic that generated them, instead of being redistributed by the federal authorities.[476]

But, after the elections of June 1992, two victorious parties with strikingly different constitutional agendas - Václav Klaus's Civic Democratic Party in the Czech lands and Vladimír Mečiar's Movement for a Democratic Slovakia in Slovakia - had a de facto veto power over each other, and were forced into a coalition at the federal level. As Karel Vodička writes, "Because of the inclusion in the Czechoslovak constitution of clauses precluding majority rule, an uncontrollable constitutional crisis was bound to happen. After the transition in 1989 it was only a question of time before it broke out"[477].

The constitutional provisions adopted under the communist regime thus provoked an institutional deadlock, which ultimately proved fatal to the state. The next section examines how this divide was crucially reinforced by the separation of the Czech and Slovak party systems.

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[476]Wolchik, *Czechoslovakia in transition*, p.74.

[477]Karel Vodicka, "Koalitionsabsprache: Wir teilen den Staat ! Wahlergebnisse 1992 und deren Folgen für die tschechoslowakische Staatlichkeit", in Kipke and Vodicka, *Abschied*, p.78

Political parties and movements: the repluralisation of Czech and Slovak politics

With the collapse of communism, a genuine multiparty system reemerged in Czechoslovakia (until 1989, the Communist party officially ruled through a "national front", but satellite parties such as the People's Party and the Socialist Party were, with the partial exception of the short-lived Prague Spring, completely subordinated to it).

The (re)pluralisation of Czechoslovak political life took place in two phases - a first phase from November 1989 to June 1990, and a second phase from June 1990 to June 1992.
The first phase was dominated by the broad anti-communist movements formed immediately after the start of the velvet revolution in November 1989: the Civic Forum in the Czech Republic and Public Against Violence in Slovakia. The first free parliamentary elections held on 7 and 8 June 1990 took the form of a referendum against communism and were dominated by the two coalitions which polled 50 and 33 percent of the votes in their respective republics (the Christian Democratic Movement proving however in Slovakia a strong contender with 19 percent of the votes).

Table 5.1: First Czechoslovak elections, 8-9 June 1990

		Federal Assembly			National Council	
	Chamber of People		Chamber of Nations			
Czech parties	% vote	Seats	% vote	Seats	% vote	Seats
Civic Forum	53	68	50	50	49	127
Communist Party	13	15	14	12	13	32
Movement for Self-Governing Democracy / Association for Moravia and Silesia	8	9	9	7	10	22
Christian and Democratic Union	9	9	9	6	8	19
Others	17	0	18	0	19	0
Total		101		75		200
Slovak Parties						
Public Against Violence	33	19	37	33	29	48
Christian Democratic Movement	19	11	17	14	19	31
Communist Party	14	8	13	12	13	22
Slovak National Party	11	6	11	9	14	22
Coexistence / Hungarian Christian Democratic Movement	9	5	8	7	9	14
Democratic Party	4	0	4	0	4	7
Green Party	3	0	3	0	3	6
Others	8	0	6	0	8	0
Total		49		75		150

Source: Karen Henderson and Neil Robinson, *Post-Communist Politics*, p.137

The absence of a common Czechoslovak oppositional movement and the creation of the Civic Forum and Public Against Violence along national lines, was in itself evidence of deep-rooted problems between Czechs and Slovaks, and started the constitutional negotiations on an ackward note. The programmes of the two movements also tended to diverge, Public Against Violence undoubtedly stressing a national issue that had no place in Civic Forum's electoral platform.
Yet, it is only with the collapse of the coalitions and the foundation of political parties with more specific programmes that the extent of the Czech-Slovak cleavage became obvious.

In the Czech lands, Civic Forum split in February 1991 between the Civic Democratic Party (CDP), a right-wing party led by Václav Klaus, the Civic Movement (CM), led by Jiří Dienstbier, and the Civic Democratic Alliance (CDA) led by Daniel Kroupa.
The main responsible for the end of the Civic Forum as a political movement was Klaus, who, elected as chairman of the group on October 13 1990, argued that Civic Forum as a broad church had no place anymore in Czech politics at a time of decisive political and economic debates. At the beginning of November, he stated

> political parties have their reason to be...politics relying, in practice, on the sole civic initiatives is for me just as inconcevable as the idea of the centralized planification of the economy...I believe that civic initiatives cannot maintain themselves on the long term. I do not think that they can constitute the structural political basis of society under normal conditions[478].

The heterogeneity of the Civic Forum (like in the case of Solidarity in Poland) could not be maintained and gave way to a political differentiation between the advocates of "shock therapy" and quick economic reforms (who constituted the core of the CDP and the CDA)

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[478]Interview with V.Klaus, *Lidové Noviny*, 02/11/90, p.9, quoted in Miroslav Novák, *Une Transition Démocratique Exemplaire ?: L'émergence d'un système de partis dans les pays Tchèques* (Prague; Centre Français de Recherche en Sciences Sociales; 1997), p.32. See also Steven Saxonberg, "Václav Klaus: The Rise and Fall and Reemergence of a Charismatic Leader", *East European Politics and Societies*, vol.13, n°2, Spring 1999, pp.399-400.

and the supporters of a more gradualist approach (who either founded the CM or joined the newly-resurrected Social Democrats).

In Slovakia, Public Against Violence managed to outlive its Czech counterpart by only two months. On 27 April 1991, after his eviction as Slovak Prime minister, the popular Vladimír Mečiar created its own political party, the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia, on a far more "nationalist" platform, while the rump Public Against Violence temporarily survived under Fedor Gál's leadership.

As a consequence, Czech and Slovak party systems started to polarise along distinct lines. Whereas the Czech parties tended to position themselves on an "economic" axis according to their attitude vis-à-vis the economic reforms, Slovak political movements often defined themselves according to a "nationalist" axis, a function of their advocacy or not of Slovak "sovereignty" (and of the different meanings this term can take). What distinguished the Czechs and the Slovaks was "not only the solutions to bring to the problems, but more fundamentally the problems to solve"[479].
This "dual' pattern had, to be true, already existed before in the history of the state - especially during the First Republic, when Hlinka's Slovak People's Party managed to consistently gather the support of around one-third of the Slovak electorate for its autonomist programme[480]. Yet, this dualism became more destructive than ever after the second parliamentary elections of June 1992, which were convincingly won in each republic by parties with fundamentally opposed political and economic agendas - Klaus's CDP in Bohemia-Moravia and Mečiar's MDS in Slovakia[481].

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[479]Novák, *Une Transition*, p.135

[480]See chapter 1

[481]See for instance Brokl and Mansfeldová, "Zerfall der Tschechoslowakei", pp.133-147.

Table 5.2 : Parliamentary elections, 5-6 June 1992

	Federal Assembly				National Council	
	Chamber of People		Chamber of Nations			
Czech Parties	% vote	seats	% vote	seats	% vote	seats
Civic Democratic Party / Christian Democratic Party	34	48	33	37	30	76
Left Bloc	14	19	14	15	14	35
Czechoslovak Social Democracy	8	10	7	6	7	16
Association for the Republic-Republican Party	6	8	6	6	6	14
Christian Democratic Union - Czechoslovak People's Party	6	7	6	6	6	15
Liberal Social Union	6	7	6	5	7	16
Civic Democratic Alliance	5	0	4	0	6	14
Movement for Self-Governing Democracy / Association for Moravia and Silesia	4	0	5	0	6	14
Others	17	0	18	0	19	0
Total		99		75		200

Slovak Parties						
Movement for a Democratic Slovakia	34	24	34	33	37	74
Party of the Democratic Left	14	10	14	13	15	29
Slovak National Party	9	6	9	9	8	15
Christian Democratcin Movement	9	6	9	8	9	18
Hungarian Christian Democratic Movement / Coexistence	7	5	7	7	7	14
Social Democratic Party in Slovakia	5	0	6	5	4	0
Others	21	0	20	0	20	0
Total		51		75		150

Source: Karen Henderson and Neil Robinson, *Post-Communist Politics*, p.237

Given this context, one has to examine the programmes of the Civic Democratic party and the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia and ask whether the electoral successes of Klaus and Mečiar in June 1992 gave them a mandate to break up the federation.

On the one hand, Klaus and Mečiar had an electoral legitimacy that could hardly be contested. Their victories in their respective republics with more than 30 percent of the votes could be seen as a reflection of the different orientations of the Czech and Slovak electors.
A close reading of the electoral programmes of the Civic Democratic Party and the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia moreover shows that the two parties made clear that the preservation of the Czechoslovak federation at all costs was not their priority. Thus, the electoral platform of the Civic Democratic Party stated that "[T]he division of the State is not

part of our programme ; but, if it were to become indispensable, we would put up with it"[482]. The CDP advocated the notion of a "functional federation", which would have the "necessary authority to maintain the juridical and economic integrity"[483] of the state.

The Movement for a Democratic Slovakia's programme for its part made clear that "[t]he development of Slovakia ... is strongly dependent on a qualitative change of constitutional organisation. In order to allow the Slovak Republic to tackle its difficult economic and social problems, its organs must have sufficient competencies. The solution of internal problems is also closely linked to international politics. In this context, Slovakia must have the possibility to develop direct relations with the other States. This requires the transformation of the existing federal structure uniting Slovak Republic and Czech Republic into a structure of sovereign republics whose each would become subject of international law"[484]. Moreover, the MDS openly stated that it would take steps to proclaim the sovereignty of the Slovak republic and draft a republican constitution.

Ultimately, the Czechs and Slovaks might not have wanted the end of their common state, but they nevertheless unambiguously gave their votes to parties and politicians who were not committed to the maintenance of Czechoslovakia. As the Slovak sociologist Soňa Szomolányiová bluntly remarked,

> [a]bsent free elections it would be plausible to blame the country divorce agreement on a small group of psychotic politicians, and they could be held responsible in the future for their destructive act. But these politicians were elected in free elections and have a mandate from their voters. The Slovak people can not be exempted from responsibility for their choices. They used their freedom, embodied in the right to vote, to delegate power to a strong leader, the charismatic Mečiar, with the hope that he would take care of them as well as take responsability for their lives. However tragic for the future of the two peoples, the current political leadership had a mandate to negotiate over the fate of Czechoslovakia. The Slovaks voted overwhelmingly for a

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[482]Novák, *Une transition*, p.144

[483]*ibid.*, p.143

[484]Tézy volebného programu HZDS, Bratislava, 1992, quoted in *ibid.*, p.145

party pledged against the previous, already loose federation; the Czechs voted for rightist parties for whom saving the federal state was not a priority[485].

Former MDS senior member and Slovak president Michal Kováč argues that the break-up was the fruit of democracy and the desire of the Slovaks to gain national self-determination. The political representations elected in the two federal units had according to him a duty to look for an agreement and the split was the result of a legitimate constitutional process[486].

On the other hand, the break-up of the state was the avowed priority of neither Klaus nor Mečiar. Klaus campaigned on the issue of economic reforms and the electoral platform of the CDP (entitled "Road to Prosperity") stated that "[w]e declare ourselves in favour of the common state"[487], whereas Mečiar only vaguely referred to the possibility of "independence".

The electoral debates in June 1992 mainly focused on economics, and the official electoral campaign itself was lacklustre and characterised by a small amount of media coverage. It lasted only twenty-three days (in contrast to forty days for the parliamentary elections of 1990) and the broadcasting time allotted to each political party was also significantly reduced (a total of twenty-one hours, equally divided among competing parties, as opposed to four hours of broadcasting for each registered party in 1990)[488]. As David Olson notes, "TV campaigning was limited to paid advertisements, all run together at one time each day, in a political, and by all accounts artistic ghetto. No TV or radio discussions about the elections, or by the candidates as candidates were permitted"[489].

In these circumstances, the Czech and Slovak electors had few opportunities to gain a clear picture of what was really at stake. Clearly, as Jiří Dienstbier put it in July 1992, "not all

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[485]Sona Szomolanyiova, "The inevitable breakup ?", *Uncaptive Minds*, Winter-spring 1993, p.62

[486]Interview with Michal Kovác, Bratislava, 07/09/1999

[487]Vodicka, "Koalitionsabsprache", p.89; Novák, *Une Transition*, p.143

[488]Jiří Pehe, "Czechoslovak Federal Assembly adopts electoral law", *RFE/RL Research Report*, 14 February 1992, pp.28-29

[489]David M.Olson, "Dissolution of the state: political parties and the 1992 election in Czechoslovakia", *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, vol.26, n°3, September 1993, p.308

voters who cast ballots for the O.D.S [the Civic Democratic Party] and HZDS [the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia] voted for the solution now under consideration and by no means did they vote for a final separation of the Czech and Slovak republics"[490]. A public opinion poll realised in Slovakia in 1992 for instance showed that only a mere 19 percent of the MDS voters declared themselves in favour of independence[491], and the Slovak National Party, the only Slovak party to campaign openly for independence, received only 9.4 percent of the votes for the Federal Assembly and an even lower 7.9 percent for the Slovak National Council.

Moreover, the CDP and the MDS which gained the support of one third of the electorate in their respective republics and in fact respectively only 27 and 12 percent of the federal votes, were hardly legitimate to divide the state without further consulting the Czech and Slovak population[492]: "the parties that won the elections but failed to gain a majority obtained rightfully the mandate for the formation of the government but not a mandate to decide the fate of the state"[493].

Mečiar once stated that "the democratic choice had been made at the time of the elections", and Klaus added that the elections had been the "key referendum" about the future of the Czechoslovak state. Given the (relatively) limited importance of the constitutional issue amidst electoral platforms largely dominated by debates about the pace and nature of economic transition, it seems however fair to contend that neither Klaus not Mečiar had a clear mandate from their electorate to divide the state.

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[490] *Time*, "Can this marriage be saved ?", July 6 1992, p.38

[491] quoted in Novák, *Une Transition*, p.146; Vodicka, "Koalitionsabsprache", p.99

[492] Vodicka , "Koalitionsabsprache", p.90

[493] Zdenek Jicinský, in Zpráva a 2. spolecné schuzi Snemovny lidu a Snemovny národnu, 2. cást, 16 cervence 1992, VII. volební období [Report of the 2nd Common Session of the Chamber of the People and the Chamber of Nations, 2nd part, 7th election term, July 16, 1992], p.181 (quoted in Stein, *Czecho/Slovakia*, p.210)

The referendum controversy

In this context, a referendum was often presented by the supporters of the federation as an alternative able to effectively pinpoint the continuing relevance of the Czechoslovak state. In December 1990, President Havel proposed the Federal Assembly to pass a law "that would permit a nationwide referendum on Czechoslovakia's constitutional setup[494]". A referendum law was adopted in July 1991, but the deputies were unable to agree on the wording of the question to be submitted to the vote. Following this, Havel suggested in November 1991 that he be allowed to call a referendum "on his own initiative or would be obliged to hold one if at least 20 percent of all eligible voters in one of the republics petitioned him to do so"[495]. This met with fierce criticism and the Federal Assembly subsequently rejected Havel's proposals.

Taking aside the "political" argument against the referendum (Czech and Slovak politicians would have probably had to face the embarrassing evidence of their electors' support for a common state)[496], there are many, both general and specific, reservations to make concerning a referendum.

At a general level, the use of the referendum as a political tool is often deemed to promote the establishment of Bonapartist regimes, where plebiscitary democracy is merely "the servant of authoritarian regimes"[497]. In fact, this was one of the official reasons why certain Czech politicians like Klaus argued against holding a referendum, which was perceived as introducing a dangerous and unnecessary element of direct democracy into political

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[494]Jiří Pehe, "Czech-Slovak Conflict Threatens State Unity", *RFE/RL Research report*, 3 January 1992, p.83

[495]Jan Obrman, "President Havel's Diminishing Political Influence", *RFE/RL Research report*, 13 March 1992, p.19

[496]See ch.6

[497]Henry E.Brady and Cynthia S.Kaplan, "Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union", in David Butler and Austin Ranney (eds), *Referendums around the World : The Growing Use of Direct Democracy* (Basingstoke and London; Macmillan Press; 1994), p.175.

life – thus potentially threatening the credibility of the parliamentary institutions of post-communist Czechoslovakia[498].

In addition, certain factors specific to Czechoslovakia made problematic the use of a referendum to solve the constitutional crisis between Czechs and Slovaks.

First of all, with about 10 million Czechs and only 5 million Slovaks, a nationwide referendum would have been biased under majority rule. The only possibility was to hold two separate referendums, one for each republic. "Under such conditions, it seems that a referendum can give an unambiguous answer only if the electorates in both republics reach the same decision: either to secede or to preserve the common state"[499]. This relates to the intrinsic problems of the referendum as a tool for decision-making in multinational states. Leff gives the example of the referendum held in Bosnia Hercegovina in the spring of 1992 as an illustration of the dangers of reliance on a system which allows the outvoting of minorities[500]. In fact, some opponents of the referendum pointed to the Yugoslav situation and noted that "the first shots in Yugoslavia resounded immediately after the publication of the results of the referendum"[501].

Secondly, even assuming that both Czechs and Slovaks would have voted in favour of the maintenance of a common state (which is a realistic hypothesis given the public opinion polls[502], and clearly differentiates the Czechoslovak case from the situation in Yugoslavia) there is still a major obstacle to consider: an agreement on the continuance of Czechoslovakia as a common state did not imply an agreement on the form this state should actually take.

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498 Jan Obrman, "President Havel's Diminishing Political Influence", *RFE/RL Research Report*, 13 March 1992, p.19.In a revelatory interview to the French daily *Le Monde*, Klaus stated that "the referendum is an extreme instrument...We are neither Serbia...,nor Georgia, nor Tadjikistan, nor Moldova. We are a normal country with working institutions. The recourse to referendum would be an extreme step, an exceptional instrument" ("Un entretien avec le premier ministre tchèque", *Le Monde*, 17 July 1992).

499 Jiří Pehe, "The referendum controversy in Czechoslovakia", *RFE/RL Research Report*, vol.1, N°43, 30 October 1992, p.37

500 Leff, *The Czech*, p.140

501 Stein, *Czecho/Slovakia*, p.263

502 See chapter 6

While the Czechs expressed their preference for a unitary state or a tight federation, the Slovaks predominantly favoured the idea of a confederation, or at least of a looser kind of federation[503], thus reproducing the pattern of division between Czech and Slovak elites.

Table 5.3 : Preferred state arrangements (November 1991-July 1992) in Czech lands (CR) and Slovakia (SR) (in percentages)

	November 1991		May 1992		July 1992	
Type of state arrangement	CR	SR	CR	SR	CR	SR
Unitary state	**39**	20	**34**	12	**38**	14
Federation	30	26	28	33	19	27
"Lands-based republic" (three units: Bohemia, Moravia and Slovakia)	20	6	22	6	18	8
Confederation	4	**27**	6	**31**	3	**30**
Two independent states	5	14	6	11	16	16
Don't know	2	7	4	7	6	5

Source: Sharon L.Wolchik, "The politics of ethnicity in Post-communist Czechoslovakia", *East European Politics and Societies*, Volume 8, n°1, Winter 1994, p.180

Therefore, a referendum with a majority in favour of the maintenance of Czechoslovakia would probably only have prolonged the constitutional stalemate, for example hindering the further and necessary transformation of the economic structures. For a politician like Klaus whose main priority was to manage a swift economic transition, waiting for a referendum had many disadvantages, above all the fact that foreign investors were likely to defer their financial commitments for as long as the constitutional negotiations were to continue.

Furthermore, there is another strong argument against a referendum. It could have crystallised resentment between the Czechs and Slovaks and provided a platform for the expression of

[503]Wolchik, "The politics of ethnicity", p.180 and Leff, *The Czech*, p.138.

nationalist rhetorics, worsening the prospects of a successful resolution of the Czech-Slovak conflict and even making impossible a "velvet divorce".

Finally, recourse to referendum has never been part of the "Czechoslovak" political tradition and no referendum has been held on Czech and Slovak territories during the existence of Czechoslovakia from 1918 to 1992[504].

Under these circumstances and as a result of passing events, Havel himself, though a staunch supporter of a referendum, came to realise that it "no longer made sense" by July 1992[505].

Institutional choices and their consequences for the outcome of the post-communist Czecho-Slovak conflicts

The decision of Czech and Slovak leaders not to use a referendum is however only one example of how post-communist institutional choices had a decisive influence on the break-up of the state.
More specifically, in their difficult decision-making (Jon Elster once equated constitution-making in post-communist societies to the action of "rebuilding [a] boat in the open sea"[506]), Czech and Slovak politicians had to answer three essential questions. First, which electoral system - majoritarian or proportional representation - would satisfy the needs of both Czechs and Slovaks ? Secondly, was parliamentarism or presidentialism the most effective way to ensure the stability of the renewed democracy (and the integrity of the federation) ?. Finally,

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[504]See for instance Henry E.Brady and Cynthia S.Kaplan, in David Butler and Austin Ranney (eds), *Referendums around the World: The Growing Use of Direct Democracy*, pp.177-179

[505]Jan Obrman, "Slovakia Declares Sovereignty ; President Havel Resigns", *RFE/RL Research Report*, vol.1, N°31, 31 July 1992, p.26. This could also be seen as the result of Havel's personal malaise and even defection (see ch.6)

[506]Jon Elster, "Constitution-making in Eastern Europe: Rebuilding the boat in the open sea", *Public Administration*, vol.71, Spring/Summer 1993, pp.169-217; Jon Elster, Claus Offe, and Ulrich K.Preuss, *Institutional Design in Post-communist Societies: Rebuilding the Ship at Sea* (Cambridge; Cambridge University Press; 1998).

and more generally, what were the levels of centralism (and decentralisation) acceptable in the eyes of both Czechs and Slovaks ?

Czech and Slovak post-communist makers had not only to overcome the institutional legacy of communism evident in the federal structures inherited from 1968 (as chapter 8 will make clear) but were also to a not negligible extent burdened by certain institutional legacies and traditions of the First Czechoslovak republic. This was manifest especially as far as the eventual choice of the proportional representation and the definition of the presidential powers were concerned. The proportional representation was one of the institutional pillars of the interwar republic, in which political parties had a predominant role. Similarly, the indirect election of the president echoed the fact that during the First Republic, the influence of Masaryk on Czechoslovak politics was more a result of his personal prestige and authority than the consequence of constitutional provisions[507].

The reference to the previous democratic experience of the interwar period was somewhat logical and natural in the context of the post-1989 transition but it also had negative aspects, since it was likely to unnecessarily limit the range of options opened to the policy-makers and thus impede the implementation of more "innovative" constitutional solutions.

Most significantly, the electoral law adopted on 29 January 1992[508] under which the elections of June 1992 took place, implicitly recognised the shift of the centre of power from the federal to the republican institutions. Under the system of proportional representation adopted, the threshold of 5% established in order to prevent a fragmentation of the parliament was applied at the republic level. A party only had to get 5 % in one of the republics to win seats in the parliament and "would be granted seats even though its total combined percentage

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[507] Judy Batt, "Czechoslovakia" in Stephen Whitefield (ed.), *The New Institutional Architecture of Eastern Europe* (New York; St-Martin's Press; 1993), p.36; Arend Lijphart, "Democratization and constitutional choices in Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland, 1989-1991", in Ian Budge and David Mc Kay (eds), *Developing democracy : comparative research in honour of J.F.P. Blondel* (London; Sage; 1994), p.212; Jon Elster, "Transition, constitution-making and separation in Czechoslovakia", *Archives Européennes de Sociologie*, vol.XXXVI, n°1, 1995, p.107; Stein, *Czecho/Slovakia*, pp.150-151

[508] For more details, see Jiří Pehe, "Czechoslovak Federal Assembly adopts Electoral Law", *RFE/RL Research Report*, 14 February 1992, pp.27-30.

of the vote of Czechoslovakia would be less than 5%"[509]. Moreover, the remainding shares of the vote were reallocated on the basis of the votes obtained at the level of the republics[510]. This had two adverse consequences for the efforts to find a new constitutional agreement between Czechs and Slovaks.

Firstly, proportional representation resulted in 1992 in a high percentage of "wasted votes" - the total vote not represented ranging from 19 percent (for the Czech National Council) to as much as 25.8 percent (for the Czech delegation to the Federal Chamber of People).

Table 5.4

Exclusion Index (total vote not represented in parliament)

	Czech Republic	Slovak Republic
Federal Assembly (Chamber of the People)	25.8	21.3
Federal Assembly (Chamber of the Nations)	26.7	20.4
Czech National Council	19.0	-
Slovak National Council	-	23.8

These percentages were on average higher than in the rest of post-communist Central Europe[511], and sharply contrasted with the (West) German experience, where a 5 %

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[509]ibid., p.29

[510]Kimmo Kuusela, "The founding electoral systems in Eastern Europe, 1989-1991", in Geoffrey Pridham and Tatu Vanhanen (eds), *Democratization in Eastern Europe: Domestic and International Perspectives* (London; Routledge; 1994), p.143

[511]David M.Olson, "Party Formation and Party System Consolidation in the New Democracies of Central Europe", *Political Studies*, vol;XLVI, special issue 1998, p.457.

Sperklausel has been applied since 1949 for the elections at the Bundestag and lost votes never exceeded 7 % (and went as low as 1 percent in the 1970s)[512].

The threshold had a negative impact on the attempts to solve Czech-Slovak tensions, since it left out of parliament moderate parties which adopted a more conciliatory approach on the "national" question. A significant number of political parties (called "near-winners" by David Olson) gained between 3.2 and 5 percent and could have qualified for seats in one of the four chambers, had a lower threshold of 3 or 4 percent been applied.

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[512]Milan Zemko, "Political Parties and the Election System in Slovakia : Retrospective on the last Three Elections to the Slovak National Council and the National Council of the Slovak Republic", in Szomolányi and Mesežnikov, *Slovakia: Parliamentary Elections 1994,* p.46-47.

Table 5.5

The 1992 Near Winners: Party Vote for Federal Assembly and National Councils

Republic and Party	Federal Assembly – Chamber of People %	Federal Assembly - Chamber of Nations %	Czech National Council %	Slovak National Council %
Czech Lands				
Civic Democratic Alliance	4.98	4.08		
Civic Movement	4.39	4.74	4.59	
Moravian / Silesian Movement	4.23	4.90		
Total	13.60	13.72	4.59	
Slovakia				
Slovak Social Democrats	4.86	4.00		
Civic Democratic Union	3.96	4.04		4.03
Democratic Coalition	3.95	3.66		3.31
Slovak Christian Democratic Movement	3.45	3.24		3.10
Total	16.22	10.94		14.44

Source: David M.Olson, "Dissolution of the State: Political Parties and the 1992 Election in Czechoslovakia", *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, vol.26, n°3, September 1993, p.311

Crucial to political developments were hence the parallel downfall of the "pro-Czechoslovak" successors of the coalitions of 1989/90 - Civic Movement in the Czech Republic and Civic Democratic Union (Public Against Violence) in Slovakia. The Democratic Coalition and the

Slovak Social Democrats (led by Alexander Dubček) also ran on a federalist platform and equally failed to make an impact on the Slovak electorate.

Secondly, largely because of the electoral law, the political parties had no interest in diluting their efforts by pursuing a state-wide campaign. It was more rewarding in electoral terms to concentrate on the constitution of a "national" stronghold, either in the Czech Lands or in Slovakia. This logically provided the most influential politicians with an incentive to establish their power base in one of the two republics and not at the federal level: Klaus's decision in the aftermath of the June 1992 elections to refuse the post of federal prime minister and become instead prime minister of the Czech republic illustrates this. President Havel had initially suggested that both Klaus and Mečiar became members of the federal government, but following Mečiar's determination to reject the offer in order to run for the post of Slovak prime minister, Klaus chose not to be part of the federal government[513]. The attitude of Klaus and Mečiar in 1992 had a precedent in 1990, when Ján Čarnogurský, the leader of the Slovak Christian Democrats, gave up his post of deputy prime minister of Czechoslovakia before the June 1990 elections, in order to become deputy prime minister in Slovakia[514].

The attempts to create state-wide parties therefore failed, and they were sometimes only half-hearted as the example of Klaus's Civic Democratic Party shows.
The CDP tried an implantation in Slovakia and formed an alliance (Democratic Coalition) with the Democratic Party. However, the coalition did not manage to win any seats in either the Slovak national Council or the Federal Assembly. Some observers noted that the efforts undertaken by the CDP had been considerably limited: "critics insist that establishing ODS (the Civic Democratic Party) in Slovakia so soon before the elections was a ruse designed, on the one hand, to give the impression that ODS was firm in its commitment to the federation, and on the other, to split the federalist vote in Slovakia, thereby making a nationalist victory

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[513]Vodicka, "Koalitionsabsprache", pp.85-86

[514]Stanislav J.Kirschbaum, *A history of Slovakia*, p.255

and the dissolution of the federation, more certain."[515]. In fact, the alliance CDP-Democratic Party in Slovakia could be said to have weakened the profederalists of what was left of Public Against Violence after the split of 1991[516].

This lack of incentive to create state-wide political parties was eventually reflected by the results of the 1990 and 1992 parliamentary elections. In 1990, 11 of the 22 parties seeking election stood in the two republics, but only one party, the Communist Party, managed to win seats in both. The only other statewide party which succeeded in gaining representation was the coalition Coexistence / Hungarian Christian Democratic Movement but it won seats only in Slovakia. By 1992, the situation had become even more unfavourable for state-wide parties: only 9 of the 41 political parties registered stood throughout Czechoslovakia, and they all failed to win seats[517]. Even the Communist Party was by then divided between the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia and the Party of the Democratic Left in Slovakia[518].

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[515]James de Candole, *Czechoslovakia: The end of an illusion* (London; Institute for European Defence and Strategic Studies; 1993), p.12

[516]Stein, *Czecho/Slovakia*, p.183. For an approach which emphasises on the contrary the serious nature of Klaus' efforts to campaign in Slovakia, see Karol Wolf, *Podruhé a naposled, aneb Mírové delení Ceskoslovenska* (Prague; G plus G; 1998), p.60-61.

[517]Gordon Wightman, "The Development of the Party System and the Break-up of Czechoslovakia" in Gordon Wightman (ed.), *Party Formation in East-Central Europe: Post-communist politics in Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland and Bulgaria* (Aldershot; Edward Elgar; 1995), pp.60-61; Paul Lewis, Bill Lomax and Gordon Wightman, "The Emergence of Multi-Party systems in East-Central Europe: a comparative analysis", in Pridham and Vanhanen, *Democratization*, p.167

[518]For more details, see Jiří Pehe, "Divisions in the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia", *Report on Eastern Europe*, July 26, 1991, vol.2, N°30, pp.10-13

Conclusion

This chapter aimed to shed light on the institutional deadlock which affected post-communist Czechoslovakia and eventually jeopardized the survival of the state.
The strict prohibition of majority rule implemented under the communist regime proved a major impediment after 1989, when Czech and Slovak leaders attempted in vain to draft a new and more adequate constitution (the flaws of Soviet-style federalism will be specifically addressed in chapter 8).

The unity of the extremely heterogeneous anti-communist coalitions did not last and Czech and Slovak party systems subsequently established themselves on essentially divergent bases. The electoral law under which the second parliamentary elections of June 1992 were conducted reinforced national faultlines and contributed to the emergence of two winners with fundamentally contradictory political agendas, Klaus and Mečiar.

However, if the institutional deadlock was undoubtedly a major factor in the dissolution of the Czechoslovak state, what made Czech-Slovak tensions unbridgeable was the role - malign or benign, intended or naive - played by Czech and Slovak elites between 1989 and 1992.
The next chapter hence looks at an "elitist" explanation of the break-up and argues that personality issues should not underestimated when trying to understand why Czechoslovakia did not survive the post-communist era.

CHAPTER 6
THE ROLE OF THE CZECH AND SLOVAK POST-COMMUNIST LEADERSHIP IN THE BREAK-UP OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA: AN "ELITIST" EXPLANATION

The previous chapter adopted institutions as its level of analysis. The present chapter concentrates on the individuals and the role of personalities in the break-up of Czechoslovakia. Individual politicians mattered in post-communist Czechoslovakia and different personalities could have meant different outcomes as far as the Czech-Slovak conflict was concerned.

After showing that neither the Czech nor the Slovak population wanted the break-up of the common state, the nature of elite changes in post-communist Czechoslovakia and the role of the elites in the velvet divorce is assessed.
A distinction is established between "postcommunist dissident" and "technocratic" elites, and it is argued that the technocratic, carrierist elites, which came to power after the second parliamentary elections of June 1992 - and especially, Václav Klaus in the Czech Republic and Vladimír Mečiar in Slovakia - are responsible for the dissolution of a state, whose population still thought worth preserving.

A break-up that Czechs and Slovaks did not want

As suggested before, one of the many paradoxes of the break-up of Czechoslovakia is that the state disintegrated even though the majority of its citizens favoured its continuance. Public opinion polls consistently showed a high level of support among the population, both Czech and Slovak, for the maintenance of the country. In June 1992, before the elections, 81 percent

of the citizens in the Czech Republic and 63 percent in Slovakia rejected the idea of separation[519].

Table 6.1: Position if a referendum were held on state arrangements (in percentages)

	October 1991		December 1991			July 1992	
Would vote to:	Czech Republic	Slovak Republic	CSFR	CR	SR	CR	SR
Maintain a common state	**70**	**52**	**68**	**73**	**58**	**53**	**42**
Divide the state	9	18	13	12	16	24	32
Don't know			12	9	16	20	23
Would abstain	31		7	6	20	_	_

Note: percentages do not add to 100 percent because those who indicated they would not particpitate in a referendum are excluded
Source: Information from the Institute for Public Opinion Research, "Názory čs. veřejnosti,"Prague, January 31, 1992, pp.12-13 (quoted in Wolchik, The politics of ethnicity in Post-Communist Czechoslovakia, *East European Politics and Societies*, Volume 8, n°1, Winter 1994, p.179)

The above table however sheds light on two important developments.
Firstly, the percentage of people willing to divide the state significantly increased between October 1991 and July 1992 (from 9% to 24% in the Czech Republic and from 18 % to 32% in Slovakia). The simple acknowledgement that "divorce" was an option became in itself an indication that the break-up would occur: as Sharon Wolchik put it,

> the very act of seriously considering divorce can imperil a shaky marriage and is frequently a sign that the marriage is already over. Relations between Czechs and Slovaks had clearly reached this point by mid-1992[520].

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[519]Leff, *The Czech*, p.137

[520]Wolchik, "The politics of ethnicity", p.187

This was even more compelling, since the costs of separation appeared relatively limited. There were no significant minority issues between Czechs and Slovaks and the republican borders, which became in January 1993 state borders, were undisputed. The confrontation between Czechs and Slovaks has always remained free of the bloody and violent conflicts that for instance characterise the relations between Croats and Serbs[521], and as discussed in chapter 4, the international environment was more favourable than ever to the existence of two separate Czech and Slovak nation-states.
Secondly, a differentiation was evident between Czechs and Slovaks, the latter appearing far less inclined to support the maintenance of the federation: in June 1992, 53 percent of the Czechs, but only 42 percent of the Slovaks thought that a Czechoslovak state should be preserved.

Despite this, the majority of the citizens of Czechoslovakia was nevertheless undoubtedly willing to continue the "Czechoslovak experience" and separatism was supported on average by only 5 percent of the population in the Czech lands and by 12 percent in Slovakia during the period January 1990-June 1992[522]. Moreover, surveys conducted in May 1994 in Slovakia showed that only a mere 26.4 percent of those polled would have voted for independence if a referendum had taken place and as much as 57.7 percent declared that they would have voted against it[523] - even if these figures should be taken with caution since, as Eric Stein puts it, "they do not say much about how the Slovaks might have voted in a referendum prior to the dissolution"[524]. The nostalgia for the common state does not necessarily mean that at the time of the vote, the electors would not have endorsed the division of the state, at the risk of regretting it later.

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[521]Robert Hislope, "The generosity moment: ethnic politics, democratic consolidation and the state in Yugoslovia (Croatia), South Africa and Czechoslovakia", *Democratization*, vol.5, n°1, Spring 1998, pp.82-83; Leff, *The Czech* , pp.140-142

[522]Wehrlé, *Le Divorce*, p.36

[523]FOCUS, Center for Social and Market analysis- opinion polls conducted from 9 May to 23 May 1994 on a sample of 2018 Slovak respondents quoted in Silvia Miháliková, "Understanding", p.17 ; cf also Minton F. Goldman, *Revolution and change in Central and Eastern Europe: political, economic and social challenges* (New York, London; ME Sharpe; 1997), p.147; Karel Vodicka, *Politisches System Tschechiens: vom kommunistischen Einparteiensystem zum demokratischen Verfassungsstaat* (Münster; Lit Verlag; 1996), p.210.

[524]Stein, *Czecho/Slovakia,* pp.319-320

Given the support of the population, both Czech and Slovak, for the maintenance of the state, the velvet divorce has been considered by many analysts such as John Higley, Jan Pakulski and Włodzimierz Wesołowski, Karel Kosík, Carol Leff, Dušan Novotný, Grigorij Mesežnikov or Karel Vodička as the product of an "elite deal"[525].
The rest of this chapter will aim to assess this argument and point out the responsibilities of Czech and Slovak post-communist leaders.

A definition and typology of Czech and Slovak post-communist elites

Michael Burton, Richard Gunther and John Higley define elites as "the persons who are able, by virtue of their strategic positions in powerful organizations, to affect national political outcomes regularly and substantially..., the principal decision makers in the largest or most resource-rich political, governmental, economic, military, professional, communications, and cultural organizations and movements in a society"[526].
Despite its usefulness, this description is too broad and the use of the sole word "elite" inadequate when it comes to illustrate the disparity and diverse origins of the post-communist Czechoslovak leadership. A typology of the post-communist Czech and Slovak elites is therefore necessary.

Following the "velvet revolution" of 1989, the communist elite was gradually replaced by a new elite mostly composed of the former dissidents who had been active since the post-1968 "normalisation" in organisations like Charter 77 and emerged in November 1989 as the leaders of the two revolutionary movements, the Civic Forum in the Czech lands and the

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[525]John Higley, Jan Pakulski and Wlodzimierz Wesolowski, "Introduction : Elite Change and Democratic Regimes in Eastern Europe", in John Higley, Jan Pakulski and Wlodzimierz Wesolowski (eds), *Postcommunist Elites and Democracy in Eastern Europe* (London; Macmillan Press; 1998); Kosík, "The Third Munich", pp.145-154; Leff, *The Czech,* p.136 ; Dušan Novotný, *Une dangereuse Mépris*e, pp.99-107 ; Vodicka, "Koalitionsabsprache"; interview with Grigorij Mesežnikov, Bratislava, 03/09/1999.

[526]Michael Burton, Richard Gunther and John Higley, "Introduction: elite transformations and democratic regimes" in John Higley and Richard Gunther (eds), *Elites and democratic consolidation in Latin America and Southern Europe* (Cambridge; Cambridge University Press; 1992), p.8. See also Robert D.Putnam, *The Comparative Study of Political Elites* (Englewoods Cliffs; Prentice Hall; 1976).

Public Against Violence in Slovakia. This elite has been qualified as the *(postcommunist) intellectual dissident* or the *moral-intellectual* elite[527]. Some of its most influential representatives are the Czechs Jiří Dientsbier, federal foreign minister from December 1989 to June 1992 and Petr Pithart, Czech prime minister during the same period, but arguably also the Slovaks Alexander Dubček, the former symbol of the Prague Spring who became after the regime change president of the Federal Assembly, and Ján Čarnogurský -who was federal deputy-prime minister from December 1989 to June 1990, founded the Christian Democratic Movement (KDS) and became Slovak prime minister between April 1991 and June 1992. The most charismatic member of the "dissident elite" however is undoubtedly Václav Havel, federal president from December 1989 to July 1992.

The post-communist "dissident elite" was characterised by the heterogeneity of its composition. As Eleonora Schneider emphasises, the new leadership was a "conglomeration of four groups: 1) the reform communists of the 'Prague Spring', most of whom still adhered to socialist ideals ; 2) many non-communist dissidents; 3) younger intellectuals from informal cultural and Christian organizations and environmentalist groups ; 4) individuals returning from exile to play an active part in the political, social or economic reform process"[528]. Civic Forum included in its ranks personalities as different as the Trotskyist Petr Uhl, the reform communists of the group "*Obroda*" (Renaissance) and the conservative Catholic Václav Benda, united by a common denominator, their opposition to the communist regime. As seen in chapter 5, this absence of shared values was bound to prove fatal to the Civic Forum and the Public Against Violence and, by 1991, the two broad movements had split up into several political parties.

Most significantly, the "intellectual post-communist dissident elite" was itself subsequently ousted at the most important posts of the state by other elites, which have sometimes been

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527 Eleonora Schneider, *Politische Eliten in der Ex-Tschechoslowakei (Teil I)* (Cologne; Berichte des Bundesinstituts für ostwissenschaftliche und internationale Studien; 1995), p.4 ; Jana Smutná, "*Les élections législatives de 1996 en République Tchèque: la démocratie retrouvée* (unpublished master thesis; Institut d'Etudes Politiques de Paris, 1997) p.35; Lubomír Brokl and Zdenka Mansfeldová, "Czech and Slovak Political and Parliamentary Elites", in Higley, Pakulski and Wesolowski, *Postcommunist Elites*, p.134.

528 Schneider, *Politische Eliten*, p.38.

called the *technocrats* or the *economists*[529]. The foremost "technocrats" were Václav Klaus, Vladimír Mečiar but also Vladimír Dlouhý, the first post-communist federal minister of economics.
There are, as we shall see great differences between Klaus and Mečiar, but two important contrasts with the dissident elite appear evident.

Firstly, what distinguished the "dissidents" from the "technocrats" was often the nature of their political involvement during the two decades of "normalisation". Most of the technocrats had no openly dissident activity before 1989 and tended to be drawn from the "grey zone" between collaboration and passive resistance to the regime. They worked within the system, even if they did not approve it and even less support it: for instance, Klaus and Dlouhý were members of the Institute of Economic Forecasting, whereas Mečiar worked as a company lawyer for a Slovak bottle factory[530].
Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, technocrats answered, unlike dissidents, A.King's definition of "career politicians" - "people committed to politics [who] regard politics as their vocation, ... seek fulfilment in politics, ... see their future in politics, ... would be deeply upset if circumstances forced them to retire from politics"[531].

Two distinct waves of elite change occurred in Czechoslovakia between 1989 and 1993: the first one in December 1989 when the communist regime fell and the dissident elite took over power, and the second one in June 1992, when the parliamentary elections confirmed the rise of a new and more technocratic elite. The dissident elite made "mistakes", but ultimately it will be argued that the greatest responsibility for the break-up of Czechoslovakia lies with the "technocrats" who took power after the 1992 parliamentary elections.

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[529]Schneider, *Politische Eliten*; Smutná, *Les élections.*

[530]For more biographical details on Klaus, see for example Hans-Joachim Hoppe, "Václav Klaus-Ministerpräsident der Tschechischen Republik: Ein Porträt", *Osteuropa*, 43.Jahrgang, Heft 11, November 1993, pp.1083-1087 ; on Vladimír Dlouhý, see Jiří Pehe, "Vladimír Dlouhý: A Politician (Almost) Everyone Loves", *Transition*, 30 January 1995, vol.1, n°1, p.33 ; on Mečiar, see Jan Obrman, "Slovak Politician accused of Secret Police Ties", *RFE / RL Research Report*, vol.1, n°15, 10 April 1992, p.15

[531]A.King, "The Rise of Career Politician in Britain - and its Consequences", *British Journal of Political Science*, vol.11, 1981, p.255 (quoted in Rod Hague, Martin Harrop and Shaun Breslin, *Comparative Government and Politics : An Introduction*; Basingstoke and London; Macmillan; 1998, 4th edition; p.198).

The mistakes of the dissidents or the "powerlessness of the powerful"[532]

Having thus defined two distinct types of post-communist Czech and Slovak elites, we now turn to assess the role of the dissident elite in the break-up of the state. Despite their good intentions, the activities of the dissidents-turned-politicians had, for several reasons, an adverse impact on Czech-Slovak relations.

First of all, the dissident elite, especially in the Czech lands, strongly underestimated the acuity and relevance of the "Slovak question":

> the great error of the new Czech ruling elite in Prague was its failure to put Slovakia on top of its agenda...[t]here was ...a mass of important things that the new Czechoslovak government had to do, all of these things were urgent. But nothing was more important or urgent than Slovakia[533].

As Otto Pick bluntly put it, "the failure of the 'velvet revolutionaries' to use the enthusiasm for change prevailing in the early months of 1990 to construct a new constitutional framework is a sin of omission which future generations may find hard to forgive[534]".
The most concrete illustration of this is certainly the "hyphen war"[535]. In his *Summer Meditations*, Havel comments that

> there would have been no need whatever to go through such a prolonged struggle over the name of our country had we simply made a slight break with parliamentary

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[532]This expression, a reference to Havel's influential essay *The Power of the Powerless* (published in 1978) was coined by the former leading dissident Jan Urban in 1992 (Juan J.Linz and Alfred Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe*; Baltimore and London; The John Hopkins University Press; 1996; p.321).

[533]J.F Brown, *Hopes and shadows: Eastern Europe after communism* (Harlow; Longman; 1994), p.56 and 57.

[534]Otto Pick, "Czechoslovakia's divisions", *The World Today*, May 1992, p.84

[535]See ch.2.

tradition and dropped the word 'socialist' from the name 'Czechoslovak Socialist Republic' the very same day I made the proposal to Parliament, instead of becoming sidetracked by arguments like 'We need time to consider it'.

He adds that "other post-Communist countries have dealt with that question in an hour"[536]. This is illustrative of Havel's inability to realize that Czechoslovakia was not a homogeneous state like Poland or Hungary but a binational state, in which the interests of the Slovak minority had to be taken into consideration. The eagerness of the Slovaks to gain a measure of international "visibility" was the first evidence of the extent of the unresolved problems betweens the two nations and the Czech reluctance to recognise this provoked the first outburst of Slovak nationalism in 1990.

In fact, as early as December 1989, Czechs and Slovaks did not seem to agree on a presidential candidate, and whereas Václav Havel was the hero of Prague, Dubček was probably at the time the most popular politician in Bratislava: "[P]osters bearing [Havel's] picture appeared on every window, door and lamp-post in Prague, with the two-word message, *Na Hrad* (To The Castle) ; similar posters appeared on the walls of Bratislava, but the picture there was of Dubček, not Havel"[537].

Furthermore, after the "hyphen war", the electoral success of the Slovak National Party (*Slovenská Národná Strana* or SNS) which attracted 13.9 percent of the Slovak electors in the June 1990 parliamentary elections, was also another evidence of the actuality of the Slovak question[538].

Apart from this incapacity to detect these warning signs of the Czech-Slovak conflict, the second reproach we can address to the post-communist Czech elite relates to the nature of their political engagement itself. Kriseová captures the dilemma of the intellectual-turned-politician in the following way:

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[536]Havel, *Summer Meditations*, p.23

[537]Michael Simmons, *The reluctant president: a political life of Václav Havel* (London; Methuen; 1991), p.192

[538]S. Kirschbaum, *A History of Slovakia,* pp.254-255

> [he] is by nature self-critical, and thus unable to campaign in his own favor. His self-criticism, detachment, non-partisan approval -these are his positive qualities. Intellectuals shy away from the power of government. They have a permanently critical attitude to power, a lack of confidence in it. For that reason they are not very successful at practical politics. The intellectual wishes to create ideas but dislikes repeating them and forcing them down people's throats. He finds it painful to go over the same story time and time again[539].

The relevance of this characterisation could be illustrated, in the case of Czechoslovakia, by several examples.

To start with, the moral stance of the dissidents, pointing at the collective guilt and responsibility of the nation for the perpetuation of the communist regime, was not likely to appeal to the population. Havel's statement in his 1990 New Year address that " we are all ... responsible for the operation of the totalitarian machinery; none of us is just its victim: we are all also its co-creators"[540] was not rewarding in electoral terms -especially in Slovakia where the grey zone between indifference and collaboration with the regime during the normalisation was much more important than in the Czech republic and where, as considered in chapter 2, communism was more positively evaluated[541]. Dissidents often embodied an ethic that alienated them from most people[542] and as Petr Pithart acknowledged in reference to the 1992 elections,

> [p]eople did not vote for us [the former dissidents], because we have shown them the mirror of morality and they could not bear it[543].

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[539]At a conference on "Intellectuals and social change in Central and Eastern Europe", published in Partisan Review, special issue, 1992, p.704-705 (quoted in T.Draper, "The end of Czechoslovakia", p.20)

[540]V.Havel, *Open letters* (London and Boston; Faber and Faber; 1991), p.392.

[541]E.Schneider, *Politische Eliten*, p.14.

[542]Hockenos, *Free to hate*, p.305.

[543]*Lidové Noviny*, 26/3/96, quoted in Smutná, *Les Elections*, p.36.

In Havel's words, "[p]eople never actually liked the dissidents too much because they saw them as their bad conscience, as they themselves had been mostly submissive, doing what they were told, without risking confrontation with authority"[544]. There is something deeply ironical in the fate of those Slovak and especially Czech dissidents, who were before 1989 largely isolated from the wider population and confined to the Prague "intellectual ghetto" but did not fundamentally succeed after the regime change in durably escaping from their social and political marginalisation.

A second related issue is the support of the dissidents for the notion of national reconciliation, based on a "soft" stance as far as the fate of the former communists was concerned. Their advocacy, as commendable as it was, of restraint and moderation in the drafting and implementation of the process of "decommunisation" was bound to be deeply unpopular. The so-called "lustration" (*lustrace*) law adopted in October 1991 controversially provided for the screening and dismissal for five years of all high political or economic offficials found to have held important responsabilities within the Communist Party or collaborated with the communist secret police as StB agents or informers[545]. Václav Havel, as President of the Federative Republic, signed the law but simultaneously proposed amendments (which were not voted), in order to allow the officials accused to defend themselves in a more effective way and to alleviate the fact that the law upheld to a large extent the concept of collective guilt and did not recognise the presumption of innocence[546]. Because of their moderate stance during the debate on *lustrace*, Havel and other leading members of the dissident elite were accused by their opponents and especially the chairman of the ultra-nationalist Republican Party Miroslav Sládek, of being "crypto-communists", plotting with the former

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[544]quoted in M.Simmons, *The Reluctant*, p.193.

[545]Jiří Pehe, "Towards the Rule of Law: Czechoslovakia", *RFE/RL Research Report*, vol.1, N°27, 3 July 1992, pp.13-15; Leff, *The Czech*, pp.85-89

[546]For more details on Havel's position, see for example: "Die unvollendete Revolution", Václav Havel im Gespräch mit Adam Michnik, *Transit*, Heft 4, Sommer 1992, pp.8-11; Speech of reception of the doctorate honoris causa of the University of New York, 27 October 1991 in *L'angoisse de la liberté*, p.184

nomenkatura[547]. The "lustration" process eventually further increased the tensions between Czechs and Slovaks, since the general attitude in Slovakia towards lustration was more than lukewarm[548].

The dissident elite was often misguided by an idealism which had an adverse effect on Czech-Slovak relations - nowhere more so than in the field of foreign policy. As shown in chapter 3, the decision announced in January 1990 by Jiří Dienstbier, to restrict arms' exports, "regardless of the economic and political consequences"[549], was doomed to be resisted by the Slovaks, who had to face the painful conversion of their military industry and were therefore much more affected than the Czechs by this decision. The divisions between Czech and Slovak interests in this respect were made obvious during the controversy surrounding the deliveries of Slovak-made tanks to Syria in 1991[550]. The idealism which dominated the foreign policy of dissident elite was furthermore demonstrated, although with less notable consequences on Czech-Slovak relations, in other instances such as the decision of Havel to apologise for the expulsion of the German minority in 1945-1948[551] or the high-profile reception given by the presidential office to the Dalai-Lama[552]. Havel's decision to make his first presidential trip in January 1990 to Munich and Bonn also led many Slovaks to believe that they mattered for their president less than the Sudeten Germans[553].

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[547]See for instance Szayna, "The Extreme-Right", p.126; Jiří Pehe, "The Politics of Intolerance : the Czech Republic", *RFE/RL Research Report*, vol.2, N°16, 22 April 1994, p.51

[548]For a more detailed account of the "lustration", see Jan Pauer, "Der tschechische Liberalkonservativismus" in Ivo Bock and Jan Pauer (eds), *Tschechische Republik zwischen Traditionsbruch und Kontinuität* (Bremen; Editions Temmen; 1995), pp.47-58; Tina Rosenberg, *The Haunted Land: Facing Europe's Ghosts after Communism* (New York; Vintage Books; 1996), pp.77-78.

[549]Paulina Bren, "Conversion slows down as Czechs and Slovak part", *RFE/RL Research report*, vol 1, N°32, 14 August 1992 and The New York Times, 25 January 1990.

[550]See chapter 3 for more details on the economic aspects of the controversy

[551]cf chapter 4 for a more detailed discussion of Czech-German relations

[552]M.Simmons, *The Reluctant*, p.195; Pauer, "Der tschechische Liberalkonservativismus", p.40; Speech of Václav Havel in Bratislava on 9 April 1990 in *L'angoisse de la liberté*, p.88.

[553]Interviews with Antoine Marès, Prague, 14/09/99 and Jiří Suk, Prague, 16/09/99

More generally, there was a tendency within the post-communist Czech elite to dismiss the expressions of Slovak nationalism as "the product of insufficient public understanding of the motivations of their leaders"[554]. Czech politicians did not distinguish between the "constitutional nationalism" of Čarnogurský and the "populist agitation" of Mečiar[555]. They did not acknowledge the difference between what was called in an article of *Lidové Noviny*, a "moderate" and a "virulent" anti-Czechoslovakism[556] and explained in a simplistic and uniform way the successes of nationalist rhetoric in Slovakia by the idea of "Slovak exceptionalism". The democratic credentials of Slovakia were thus put in doubt, in line with a long historical Czech tradition of denial of Slovakia's democratic tradition. Even Havel adopts this attitude, when he writes that "some very disturbing elements periodically occur and reoccur in Slovak politics. One example is a tendency to make quick, sometimes almost frightened and opportunistic changes in position"[557].

To a large extent, this characteristic Czech perception of Slovakia became a self-fulfilling prophecy, which had the unfortunate consequence to further radicalise Slovak opposition to the idea of a common state. Klaus himself indirectly stressed the dangers of such a standpoint when he warned in July 1992 that "it would be absolutely wrong to demonize Mr. Mečiar, as is done in the Czech press and the Western press. He is a standard, rational politician who is maximizing his position, using arguments that are most useful"[558].

The Czechs often considered the nationalist movement in Slovakia as the product of intra-Slovak political conflicts, a feeling reinforced by the political instability of Slovak political life. Typical of this attitude is a statement of Pavel Rychetský, vice-president of the Civic Movement and federal vice-prime minister in charge of legislation until June 1992, that

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[554]Leff, "Czech and Slovak Nationalism", p.118.

[555]de Candole, *Czechoslovakia*, p.12

[556]*Lidové Noviny*, 29 November 1990, quoted in Wehrlé, *Le divorce*, p.147-148

[557]Havel, *Summer meditations*, p.39

[558]*Time*, July 6, 1992, p.39 ; See also Miroslav Kusý, "V. Mečiar je cistý pragmatik", in *Lidové Noviny*, 16.06.92 and Vodicka, "Koalitionsabsprache", p.98.

> the real cause of our [Czech-Slovak] crisis is not a Czech-Slovak conflict, but a Slovak-Slovak conflict. Indeed, the victorious political formation [in the June 1990 elections] has split up and therefore the governmental coalition has changed. The new Slovak coalition, and thus the Slovak government, are exceedingly unstable...Because of the forthcoming elections [in June 1992], this instability has had a specific effect: almost all Slovak political parties and movements compete with each other to be 'the most Slovak'[559].

The intellectuals-turned-politicians were inclined to regard voter displeasure and dissatisfaction as a manifestation of the impact of populist electoral tactics rather than as the logical and inevitable outcome of their own policies. The dissident elite was consequently not ready to actively try to develop a power basis among existing or emerging social groups[560]. In a way, the intellectuals which assumed power after 1989 sometimes had the pretension to be, like the communist party in its time, the "vanguard" of the society. They were in the paradoxical position of democrats without an understanding of what democracy means or how it actually works and were not necessarily ready to abide by the rules of the game, especially as far as electoral campaigning was concerned.

The electoral campaign of June 1992 was hence marked by the passivity of the former dissidents. As Pithart, one of the vice-presidents of the Civic Movement retrospectively observed,

> [W]ith two many Civic Movement ministers in the government, we devoted minimum time to Civic Movement. It may have been good generally for the country but for us it was not good... Our people were immensely used up and did not even see the urgency of devoting time to the Movement and elections...More than by its center position,

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[559]Pavel Rychetský in "Les Slovaques méconnus exigent d'être reconnus", *La Nouvelle Alternative*, December 1991, n°24, p.21

[560]Arista Maria Cirtautas, "The Role of Nationalism in East European Latecomers to Democracy", in Stephen E.Hanson and Willfried Spohn (eds), *Can Europe Work ?: Germany and the Reconstruction of Post-communist Societies* (Seattle; University of Washington Press; 1995), pp.38-39.

Civic Movement was hurt by the fact that it was a government party, and people simply rejected the government party[561].

What is more, the electoral campaign of the Civic Movement was marred by strategic errors, such as the decision to focus on the towns. This proved to be a mistake: the Civic Movement was expected to perform relatively well in the Bohemian urban areas like Prague or **Pilsen**[562], but failed to attract the votes of the more rural areas of the country (especially in South Moravia) where the inhabitants were, because of the proximity of the region with Slovakia, more "pro-Czechoslovak" and more likely to support the "Czechoslovak"-oriented Civic Movement[563]. A more active campaigning outside Prague would probably have enabled the Civic Movement to reach the 5 percent required to gain representation in the Federal Assembly and in the Czech National Council.

The slogan "We go the right way", also proved ultimately harmful, since it was Klaus and the Civic Democratic Party who symbolised the success of the economic reforms[564].

To an extent, the coming to power of the technocrats, which saw themselves as "professional" politicians, was a positive step towards the consolidation of the Czech and Slovak democracy and marked the real end of the "velvet revolution" and the "routinization" of politics[565]. The dissidents were "virtuous ... but not necessarily competent"[566], and the reemergence of Czech-Slovak antagonisms after 1989 required a political know-how that they hardly had. As Fedor Gál, one of the leaders of Public Against Violence, noted,

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[561]Stein, *Czecho/Slovakia*, pp.186-187.

[562]Tomáš Kostelecký, "Changing party allegiances in a changing party system: the 1990 and 1992 parliamentary elections in the Czech Republic", in Wightman, *Party Formation*, p.85 and 94

[563]O. Krejčí, *History of Elections in Bohemia and Moravia* (Boulder, East European Monographs; New York; Columbia University Press; 1995), p.336.

[564]*ibid.*, p.302.

[565]Thomas A. Baylis, "Elite Change After Communism: Eastern Germany, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia", *East European Politics and Societies*, vol.12, n°2, Spring 1998, p.268.

[566]Jacques Rupnik, "Le système politique à l'épreuve du changement", in *L'Autre Europe*, N°28-19, 1994, p.39, quoted in Smutná, *Les élections*, p.37

> we [the former dissidents] were overwhelmed with sollicitations which we did not have the capacity to handle. We had little time and a low level of professional competence. We were convinced to live a revolution and not to find ourselves in a American-style parliament...[567].

The dissident elite was often characterised by political amateurism. For instance, when Václav Havel sought to constitute his Chancellery, he relied on old friends of his dissident years, who had no concrete experience of politics, or on former exilees, like Prince Karel Schwarzenberg, who had come back to Czechoslovakia after 1989 and were out of touch with the situation of the country. Significantly, the circle of Havel's advisors included many men of letters or artists like Pavel Kohout, Jiří Pelikán, Josef Škvorecký, Pavel Tigrid, the film director Miloš Forman or even the American rock star Frank Zappa (adviser in ... foreign economic relations[568]) but almost no Slovak or jurist. The presidential team lacked of professional experts, and when the single trained lawyer on the president's permanent staff resigned, he was not replaced and Havel was left only with one consultant, Vladimír Klokočka, a professor of constitutional law at the University of Munich of Czech origin[569]. Havel brought to the Castle in 1989/1990 Slovak personalities such as the former actor Milan Kňažko who had a limited visibility and authority in Slovakia[570]. Furthermore, the idea to create a vice-presidency occupied by Kňažko never materialized - provoking tensions between Czech and Slovaks former dissidents and the resignation of Kňažko only a few weeks after his arrival in Prague[571].

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[567]quoted in Smutná, *ibid.*, p37

[568]M.Simmons, *The Reluctant*, p.199

[569]Stein, *Czecho/Slovakia*, p.109. To be fair, Havel did not have much of a choice and very few Czechs and Slovaks were more than "amateurs" at politics after four decades of communist rule (see Ch.8).

[570]Interview with Jana Reschová, Prague, 14/09/99

[571]John Keane, *Václav Havel: a political tragedy in six acts* (London; Bloomsbury; 1999), p.457.

Under these circumstances, the post-communist political elite issued from the ranks of dissent, shares a responsibility in the break-up of Czechoslovakia because of its failure to grasp the complexity and the legitimacy of certain Slovak concerns. Havel once acknowledged that

> everything indicates that most Czechs had no idea how strong was the longing of the Slovaks for autonomy and for their own constitutional expression, and that they were more than surprised at how quickly after our democratic revolution this longing began to stir, and how powerfully it expressed itself[572].

A rapid awareness of the acuity of the "national issue" and a willingness to address it early could have done a lot to save the state: the dissident elite lost the opportunity to use the euphoria of the immediate aftermath of the revolution to take rapid constitutional decisions.
The time factor was crucial, since changes were more likely to be accepted at the beginning of 1990 than after the elections of June 1992. As Juan J.Linz and Alfred Stepan pointed out concerning the timing of democratic transition, "[p]otentially difficult democratic outcomes may be made manageable only if some type of pre-emptive policies and decisions are argued for, negotiated, and implemented by political leaders. If the opportunity for such ameliorative policies is lost, the range of available space for maneuver will be narrowed and a dynamic of societal conflict will probably intensify until democratic consolidation becomes increasingly difficult and eventually impossible"[573].
In this context, the attempts to save the Czechoslovak federation appeared to have been "too little and too late", and by the end of the first half of 1992 (if not before), a dynamic of disintegration had begun. The break-up of Czechoslovakia came as a result of a "lost opportunity"[574] - in fact perhaps many lost opportunities - and nothing seems more illustrative of this than Pithart's revelations that, at the beginning of the Velvet revolution, when "leaders from the Slovak capital of Bratislava came to talk to Havel about the Civic Forum party apparatus in Slovakia, Havel urged them to create their own separate party in

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[572]Havel, *Summer meditations*, p.26

[573]Linz and Stepan, *Problems*, p.37

[574]J.F Brown, *Hopes*, p.56

Slovakia"[575]. Despite its good intentionsm Havel lost at the time an occasion to establish a strong state-wide party[576]. Similarly, it has been argued that the (pro-Czechoslovak) Civic Movement would have made it into parliament, had Havel actively supported it in June 1992[577].

However, even if the opportunity to create a state-wide movement was not seized in 1989 (a reflection of the "antipolitical" and even hostile attitude of Havel vis-à-vis political parties)[578] there were still many possibilities left to try to insure the success of the constitutional negotiations between Czechs and Slovaks.

First of all, the decision taken in January 1990 and consistently defended by Havel[579], to limit the mandates of the first post-communist democratically-elected parliament as well as that of the federal president, to two years, was misconceived. When the time came in 1992 to hold the elections, the euphoria of 1989-1990 had disappeared and the state was in the middle of a social and economic transition, whose painful consequences strongly affected Slovakia[580] and made even more difficult the definition of common interests between Czechs and Slovaks[581]. As Leff put it, "[i]t is certainly possible...that some agreement could have been reached if there had been a way of postponing decision on the national bargain until the political and economic transitions had been more firmly under way"[582].

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[575]Public Against Violence was subsequently set up in Slovakia. cf Linz and Stepan, *Problems*, p.331.

[576]Vodicka, "Koalitionsabsprache", p.102

[577]Saxonberg, "Václav Klaus", p.404.

[578]In the Czech environment, Havel's attitude was also to an extent reminiscent of Beneš's profound distrust of political parties and partisanship (O. Krejčí, *History of Elections*, pp.104-107).

[579]Havel, *Summer meditations*, p.21

[580]see chapter 3

[581]Vodicka, "Koalitionsabsprache", p.102

[582]Leff, *The Czech*, p.143

Secondly, the institutional deadlock which was bound to result from the strict observance of the 1968 Constitution could have been considerably reduced, provided the dissident elite, and especially Havel, had endeavoured to have a reformed provisional constitution adopted by the Federal Assembly before the 1990 elections, at a time when they still had the prestige and influence to carry on with such a step[583]. The integrity of Czechoslovakia was endangered by "[t]he retention of a 'paper' constitution which ha[d] unexpected destabilizing and paralyzing consequences when used under more electorally competitive conditions"[584].

Finally, a direct election of the president could have reinforced the legitimacy of the presidential office and consequently the cohesion of the Czechoslovak state[585]. However, this was made in practice impossible because of the constitutional tradition inherited from the First republic and perhaps above all because of Havel's reluctance to consider this option. To an extent, the Czechoslovak case somewhat contradicts the commonly-held rational-choice assumption that "constitution makers pursue their own individual interests above all else"[586] since the popularity of Havel in the immediate aftermath of the revolution would have without doubt allowed him to be elected president, with more constitutional prerogatives, at the occasion of a direct election. Havel had an almost Gaullist attitude to political parties, yet he failed to assimilate early enough the other tenant of the Gaullist approach to constitution-making, i.e the necessity of a strong presidency.

Considering all this, the defeat of the dissident elite in the 1992 parliamentary elections is not surprising. The anti-political idealism of the former dissidents-turned-politicians was

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[583]Elster, "Transition, constitution-making", pp.111-112

[584]Linz and Stepan, *Problems*, p.82

[585]There seems to be a general correlation between presidential powers and direct elections (for example, the directly-elected French president has more powers than the indirectly-elected German or Italian presidents). The case of Austria and Slovakia (where Rudolf Schuster was directly elected) indicates however that the link between directly-elected and strong presidency is far from incontestable.

[586]Arend Lijphart and Carlos H.Waisman, "Institutional Design and Democratization", in A.Lijphart and C.H. Waisman (eds), *Institutional Design in New Democracies: Eastern Europe and Latin America* (Boulder; Westview Press; 1996), p.6; See also John T.Ishiyama, "Transitional Electoral Systems in Post-Communist Eastern Europe", *Political Science Quarterly*, vol.112, N°1, Spring 1997, pp.95-115.

illustrated by an inefficient electoral campaign, a difficulty to communicate their message and, as a consequence of this absence of political realism, the impossibility to compete with highly organised political adversaries, such as Klaus's Civic Democratic Party or Mečiar's Movement for a Democratic Slovakia. The most symbolic victim was the Civic Movement which failed to reach the 5% necessary to gain representation in the Federal Assembly or the Czech national council.

The importance of the elite change in 1992 can hardly be underestimated, and only 17 percent of the deputies of the Federal Assembly were reelected. As Eric Stein remarks,

> [t]he extent to which the political establishment was swept away by the elections was truly astonishing. It exceeded by far the usual postelection change in the American Congress, and it was substantially more radical than the sweep resulting from the 1994 elections in scandal-ridden Italy, where 2/3 of the Parliament failed to return...[587].

The responsibilities of the technocrats or the "power of the powerful"

The dissidents' advocacy of "antipolitics" strongly differed from the pragmatic adhesion of the technocrats to the concept of "non-politics" or "all-economics"[588]. Whereas Havel had a moral vision of politics and conceived his responsability in term of duty and responsability[589], Klaus and Mečiar understood politics as a "fight for power"[590] and

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[587]Stein, *Czecho/Slovakia*, p.185. As Rod Hague, Martin Harrop and Shaun Breslin note, "[i]n most parliaments, re-election rates are high...The success rate of incumbents in winning reelections is over 85 per cent in Denmark, Germany, Japan, New Zealand and the USA. It is around 60 per cent in France, Great Britain and Israel" (*Comparative*, p.198)

[588]Kare Dahl Martinsen, "Václav Klaus und die politische Stabilität in der Tschechischen Republik", *Osteuropa*, 44.Jahrgang, Heft 11, November 1994, p.1069.

[589]In a speech to the Federal Assembly after the elections of June 1992, he emphatically declared : "I do believe in the moral origins of politics as a service to our fellow beings. I do believe in the moral roots of any purposeful human coexistence on earth. I do believe in civic values and civic community. I do believe in human freedom. I do believe in democracy..." ("President Addresses Federal Parliament", FBIS-EEU-92-124, 26 June 1992, pp.7-8, quoted in Sharon L.Wolchik, "The Czech Republic: Havel and the evolution of the presidency since 1989", in Ray Taras (ed.), *Postcommunist presidents* (Cambridge; Cambridge University Press; 1997), p.175.

[590]Pauer, "Der tschechische Liberalkonservativismus", p.40

refused to recognise the existence or the validity of a political ethics. In an article written as early as September 1989 with his colleague of the Institute for Prognostics Tomáš Ježek, Klaus had already more or less stated his credo as a politician:

> [w]e try to be led by pragmatic flexibility rather than by moralistic or ideological fundamentalism. Sound reform measures should be guided by properly understood and well-articulated national interests, not by abstract ideas[591].

The minimal involvement of the dissident elite in the electoral campaign was bound to have as a consequence their defeat of June 1992, especially since their main political opponents adopted on the contrary an extremely voluntarist and active attitude. A declaration made by Klaus in April 1992 is in itself illustrative of the different political mentality of the two groups:

> I appeared in meetings on the average twice a week, and now, before the elections, let's say six times...for me it would have been the simplest thing to play the role of a technocratic finance minister who only contemplates the nuances of turning and returning economic instrumentalities of the reform. But I realized in time -hopefully in time- that I myself had to conquer political support... In the last meetings in which I took part the halls were literally jammed and transmission had to be arranged into stairways and adjoining rooms...[592].

Klaus considered himself in "permanent electoral campaign, always 'on the road'"[593] and was deeply aware that political success "required enormous political activity and hundreds of

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[591]Václav Klaus and Tomáš Ježek, "Social criticism, false liberalism, and recent changes in Czechoslovakia", *East European Politics and Societies*, vol.5, n°1, Winter 1991, p.39.

[592]Václav Klaus, Rok-Málo ci mnoho v dejinách zeme [A Year : Little or a Lot in the History of the Country], pp.9 and 13 (Repro-Media, Praha, 1993), quoted in Stein, *Czecho/Slovakia*, pp.186

[593]Spiegel-Gespräch (Václav Klaus), "Wohlfart untergräbt Moral", *Der Spiegel*, 22/1996, p.144.

political rallies in the country meeting thousands of people, speaking in hundreds of local meetings"[594].

The media presence of Klaus and Mečiar was accordingly extremely important, rythmed by daily appearances on the major Czech and Slovak newspapers and television channels, and gave them a visibility among the population than the main leaders of the dissident elite could not match[595]. Financially, the Civic Democratic Movement and the Movement for Democratic Slovakia relied on far more resources than their competitors - the CDP having for instance in the Czech lands spent 87 million Czechoslovak crowns, more than twice the budget of the Civic Movement or the Czech Social Democrats (40 million each)[596].

Klaus and Mečiar were electorally successful, because they were prepared to *sell* their vision to the electorate[597]. This indirectly led to the break-up of the state, since this second generation of Czech and Slovak post-communist elites came to have a political and personal stake in the division of the state.

The creation of the Czech and Slovak republics fulfilled the ambitions of Klaus and Mečiar, by providing them with a solid power base and offering them the prospect of becoming prime ministers in their respective independent republics. The unfolding of the negotiations[598] between June 1992 and November 1992, when the Federal assembly finally voted after four unsuccessful attempts the law dissolving the federation, demonstrated the lack of readiness of both leaders to compromise. Klaus, the free-marketeer had based its political credibility on his capacity to manage a fast economic reform, while Mečiar advocated on the contrary the slowing down of the programme of economic reforms and insisted on the rather vague and

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[594]Klaus in Mario I. Blejer and Fabrizio Coricelli (eds), *The Making of Economic Reform in Eastern Europe: Conversations with Leading Reformers in Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic* (Aldershot; Edward Elgar; 1995), p.105.

[595]See for example Pauer, "Der tschechische Liberalkonservativismus", p.27.

[596]O. Krejčí, *History*, p.290. Abbey Innes (*The Break-up of Czechoslovakia: The Impact of Party Development on the Separation of the State*; Cambridge MA; Minda de Gunzburg Center for European studies; Harvard University; 1996; p.26) however estimates the CDP budget at only 75 million crowns.

[597]The expression "selling a vision" is a recurrent feature of Klaus's writings.

[598]For more details on the negotiation rounds, see for example Eric Stein, *Czecho/Slovakia* or Novák, *Une Transition.*

ill-defined notions of Slovak "sovereignty" or "international subjectivity" ("*mezinárodneprávní subjektivita*"[599]).
Klaus and Mečiar had not only distinct, but also to a large extent opposite, political interests, which they were unprepared to sacrifice to save the Czechoslovak state. The smallest common denominator between them was that the break-up of Czechoslovakia was perceived by both as serving their respective objectives. This explains why they agreed in June 1992 to the formation of a caretaker federal government led by a member of the Civic Democratic Party, Jan Stráský.

In many respects, there was between Klaus and Mečiar not only a clash of interests but also a profound clash of personalities.
Klaus is above all a very pragmatic and determined politician, whose self-confidence is widely perceived as arrogance by his political enemies (but also his colleagues). His international profile as a respected and competent economist undoubtedly explains why Vladimír Dlouhý once described him as "top of the class"[600]. In sharp contrast, Mečiar is a natural "populist", a deeply "emotional" politician, who never forgives his enemies, is capable of swift changes of opinions, and favours bluff as a negotiating strategy.
Klaus argued that a "working federation" was the only possible option if the common state was to be preserved, whereas Mečiar pushed for a confederal solution. Unsurprisingly, the negotiations between such opposite characters proved extremely difficult and the two men quickly agreed to disagree and started to discuss the terms of the dissolution of the state.

More generally, the "velvet divorce" also created career opportunities for a whole new political elite, especially in Slovakia. The establishment of an independent Slovakia created numerous highly-paid jobs in the civil service of the new state. For example, more than 1600 positions were made available in the diplomatic service alone, including 80 posts of ambassadors paid in hard currency[601]. It is difficult to imagine that the members of Mečiar's

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[599]Novák, *Une Transition*, p.142

[600]Jean-Luc Delpeuch, *Post-Communisme: L'Europe au Défi, Chronique Pragoise de la Réforme Economique au coeur d'une Europe en crise* (Paris; L"Harmattan; 1994), p.73.

[601]Vodicka, "Koalitionsabsprache", p.99

Movement for a Democratic Slovakia who had just won the elections were completely unaware of the personal benefits they could gain following the end of Czechoslovakia[602]. The same argument could probably be made as far as the attitudes and private interests of the Czech politicians are concerned. For instance, the decision in 1992 to create a Czech Senate was arguably intended to provide jobs for the Czech deputies of the Federal Assembly -and indirectly, to "bribe" them into accepting the break-up[603].

The inability of Czech and Slovak elites to concur on the constitutional structure of a "Czechoslovak" state was not only a post-communist problem but a constant throughout the existence of the common state. It had however more harmful consequences in 1992, since, after four decades of communism, the traditional "Czechoslovak"-oriented Slovak elite was reduced to a minimum. The Soviet-inspired system prevented communication between Czechs and Slovaks and Slovak leaders such as Alexander Dubček but also more significantly, Vladimír Mečiar, had been educated in Moscow, and not in Prague. Furthermore, contacts between Czech and Slovak dissidents during the 1970s and at least the first half of the 1980s were extremely limited by the "normalisation" undertaken by the communist regime[604].

The Slovak elite of 1989-1992 was therefore less likely to be attached to the maintenance of Czechoslovakia, even if there remained a "pro-Czechoslovak" Slovak elite -of whom the most influential members were probably Dubček and Čalfa[605]. This was nevertheless in sharp contrast to the interwar period, during which the political elite consisted of a complex "triangle"[606] formed by the Czech politicians, the Slovak nationalists but also an important number of what could be called "Czechoslovak Slovaks" (for instance, Milan Hodža, Ivan

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602 *ibid.*,pp.99/100

603Elster, "Constitution-making in Eastern Europe: Rebuilding the Boat in the Open Sea", p.191. This did not however prevent Klaus to delay until 1996 the establishment of the upper chamber.

604See chapters 2 and 8

605Perhaps not coincidentally, Čalfa and Jan Čarnogurský, were educated in Prague (interview with Jana Reschová, Prague, 14/09/1999).

606This concept has been extensively developed by Carol Skalnik Leff in *National conflict.*

Dérer or Vavro Šrobár), because of their profound belief in the union between the two nations.

Conclusion: the naïveté of the dissident elite, the malignity of professional politicians ?

As a conclusion, it appears necessary to put the role of the Czech and Slovak elites in a broader historical perspective[607]. One should wonder whether the break-up of Czechoslovakia in 1993 was not the unfortunate outcome of a "betrayal of the clerks"[608].

This chapter has first tried to show that the post-communist dissident elite in power between December 1989 and June 1992 could have been more proactive in its handling of the Czech-Slovak conflict. The former dissidents which became self-made politicians after the velvet revolution faced the traditional dilemma of the intellectuals engaged in political activity: the difficulty, if not impossibility, to conciliate the categorical imperative characteristic of the intellectual reflection with the practical, and often more down-to-earth, nature of political life[609]. To an extent, the post-1989 dissident elite had forgotten the lessons of Masaryk, who stated in one of his conversations with Karel Čapek in 1928:

> [a]s far as the intelligentsia is concerned, I am myself, as an intellectual, favourable to the intelligentsia and its influence in the administration of the state but I believe in a genuinely cultured, *practical*, and I would say virile, intelligentsia... A correct and really intelligent intelligentsia has a real possibility to be the *de facto* guide of the nation. Of course, in order to achieve this, it must use the institutions and conditions

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[607]For general studies of the historical role of Czech and Slovak intellectuals, see Hroch, *Social Preconditions*, pp.44-61; Brock, *The Slovak National Awakening*; Holy, *The Little Czech*; Jacques Rupnik, "Intellectuals and power in Czechoslovakia", *Acta*, vol.2, n°5-8, Winter 1988; Bernard Michel, *La Mémoire de Prague.*

[608]To use the famous expression of Julien Benda (*La Trahison des Clercs*; Paris; Grasset; 1927).

[609]See for instance Ralf Dahrendorf, *Reflections on the Revolution in Europe, in a Letter intended to have been sent to a gentleman in Warsaw, 1990* (London; Chatto & Windus; 1990), pp.8-9.

created by the democracy and, *as a minority, it must be, I repeat, credible, it must have a precise, practical, non utopian agenda*[610].

Significantly, the attitude of certain members of the dissident elite changed after their electoral defeat of June 1992. The clearest example of this is probably Havel himself, whose "language" uncontestably evolved between December 1989 and January 1993, even if this was in a way a logical process since "one cannot, being the president of a republic, remain an intellectual which expresses himself as such"[611]. It has been suggested that the main reason why Havel did not attempt after his resignation in July 1992 a last effort to use his moral authority to save the Czechoslovak state, was his wish not to alienate Klaus, on whose support his election as president of the new Czech Republic was to be dependent[612].
Despite their failure to prevent the break-up of the state, the former dissidents adopted an approach to power that undoubtedly had many positive aspects, especially since their sense of the moral duties of the "politician" could be said to have contributed to the peaceful character of the division of Czechoslovakia. Havel is no Milosevic and Czech and Slovak intellectuals did not inflame nationalist passions like their Serbian or Croatian counterparts[613]. Perhaps more importantly, regardless of their shortcomings, the intellectuals-turned-politicians probably demonstrated that, to paraphrase the French statesman George Clémenceau, politics is much too serious a thing to be left to politicians: Havel was naïve in his handling of the Czech-Slovak crisis, yet his intentions were hardly malevolent.

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[610]cf Lidové Noviny, April 8 1928, Masarykuv sborník, III, p.167, quoted in Bernard Michel, *La Mémoire de Prague*, pp.116-117 (emphasis added)

[611]Pierre Mertens, "Etre écrivain aujourd'hui", *Transcultures*, vol.1, 1994, p.5

[612]E. Stein, *Czecho/Slovakia*, p.225; for a critical approach which stresses the taste for power of Havel, see John Keane, "The Tragedy of King Havel", *The Sunday Times*, 19 April 1998, p.10 and his biography, *Václav Havel*. Many pro-federation Czechs and Slovaks have criticized Havel for his decision not to finish his presidential mandate (which was officially due to expire on October 5 1992), and argued that his resignation demoralised the people who still wanted to fight for the Czechoslovak state (interview with the Slovak journalist Róbert Kotian, Bratislava, 08/08/99).

[613]On the role of Serbian and Croatian intellectuals, see Slavenka Drakulic, "Intellectuals as Bad Guys", *East European Politics and Societies*, vol.13, n°2, Spring 1999, pp.271-277 or Dubravka Ugresic, *The Culture of Lies* (London; Phoenix House; 1998). Drakulic for example describes Dobrica Cosic, the Serbian novelist and one-time Serbian president as "a sad counterpoint" to Havel (p.273).

Tellingly, the Czechs and Slovaks still perceived the division of Czechoslovakia as a process that, in terms reminiscent of the Munich agreement of 1938, was "about us" and took place "without us"[614]. For example, a poll conducted by the Institute of Public Opinion Research in July 1992 shows that 82 percent of respondents in the Czech Lands and 84 percent in Slovakia agreed that the further existence of the state should be determined not by politicians but only by citizens in a referendum[615]. In a previous survey at the end of 1991, 61 percent of the Czechs and 65 percent of the Slovaks polled expressed their belief that politicians are using the question of nationalism for their own purposes.

Table 6.2 : Politicians are using the question of nationalism for their own purposes (in percentages)

	Czech Republic (1,209)	Slovakia (1,360)
Agree strongly	**26**	**27**
Agree somewhat	**35**	**38**
Neither agree nor disagree	26	25
Disagree somewhat	10	8
Disagree strongly	3	2

Source: Michael J.Deis, "A study of nationalism in Czechoslovakia", *RFE / RL Research Report*, 31 January 1992, p.12

Those responsible for the break-up of Czechoslovakia were not Havel and his entourage, but the two winners of the June 1992 elections, Klaus and Mečiar.

Their success can largely be explained by their willingness to ride the wave of Czech and Slovak nationalisms, at the risk of the existence of Czechoslovakia.

The next chapter therefore considers the reemergence of nationalism in post-communist Czechoslovakia and shows how the technocrats which replaced the dissidents in 1992 were not only more "professional", but also more "nationalist".

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[614]D.Novotný, *Une dangereuse méprise*, p.102

[615]Wolchik, "The politics of ethnicity", p.178.

CHAPTER 7
CZECH, SLOVAK AND CZECHOSLOVAK NATIONALISMS

> Our thinking has been more deeply affected by totalitarianism than I would ever have thought possible. We celebrate how quickly, elegantly and painlessly we rid ourselves of communism. But now we've got the angry and vociferous builders of a new totalitarianism coming at us with clenched fists. Today it's mostly the nationalists..."Anyone who's Slovak / Czech should think the way we do, act the way we do, and should always be with us". "Anyone who's not with us is against us" is the central slogan of any totalitarian system...It rejects dialogue...compromise...and tolerance, which allows for the existence of a reasonable option that is not one's own
>
> Miroslav Kusý, 4 May 1990
> Interview with *Literárny týždenník*[616]

As early as 1990, the renowned Slovak intellectual Miroslav Kusý was warning against what had emerged as a major threat to the renewed Czechoslovak democracy: the resurgence of nationalism in political life. There was, according to Kusý, a risk that communist totalitarianism would merely be replaced by a new "nationalist" totalitarianism. As many observers have said, "[t]he collapse of communism left an ideological and political vacuum in which ethnicity naturally emerged as an attractive and available foundation of a newly defined political community"[617].

In fact, the end of communism -which claimed to replace the ideology of "nation" by an ideology based on the concept of "class" and contended that nationalism was just an ephemeral expression of class conflicts- paradoxically showed that nationalism was still

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[616]"Nationalism, Totalitarianism and Democracy : An Interview with Miroslav Kusý", in Whipple, *After the Velvet Revolution*, p.240

[617]Charles Kupchan, "Conclusion", in Charles A. Kupchan (ed.), *Nationalism and Nationalities in the New Europe* (Ithaca, NY; Cornell University Press; 1995), p.181.

relevant and politically salient in Czechoslovakia , as well as in all the other Central and Eastern European states.

Chapter 8 discusses the links between communism and nationalism, but the more limited objective of the present chapter will be to examine the role played by the reemergence of nationalism in the break-up of Czechoslovakia.

However, before developing these points, it appears necessary to provide a working definition of "nationalism". Nationalism is in itself a deeply controversial and ambiguous concept: one of the most prominent students of nationalism, Czech-born Ernest Gellner, influentially described it as "primarily a political principle, which holds that the political and national unit should be 'congruent'"[618].

Tentatively, nationalism could be characterised as an ideology or political doctrine, which acknowledges the nation as the entity to which the loyalty of any individual is due and therefore purports to assert the nation's rights to sovereignty and to the formation of an independent "national" state.

More specifically, in a binational state like Czechoslovakia after 1989, there was the potential for the apparition of three nationalisms with conflicting goals -Czech, Slovak but also "Czechoslovak"- and this proved fatal to the existence of a common Czecho-Slovak state.

The first section therefore considers the extent to which the disintegration of the Czechoslovak federation could be deemed to be the consequence of an upsurge of Slovak nationalism. At this stage, the use of nationalist and populist rhetoric by Slovak post-communist leaders, and above all by the most influential of all, Vladimír Mečiar, will also be assessed.

The second section argues that interpreting the break-up of Czechoslovakia as the outcome of the sole Slovak nationalism is reductionist: indeed, the fall of the communist regime was also followed by an outburst of Czech nationalism, albeit under a different form, i.e the neo-liberalism or "liberal conservatism" of Václav Klaus.

The third section then turns to one of the many paradoxes of the dissolution of the Czechoslovak federation: after 1989, Slovak and Czech nationalisms were not matched by

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[618]Ernest Gellner, *Nations and nationalism* (Oxford; Blackwell; 1983), p.1.

"Czechoslovak" nationalism and this made it extremely difficult for supporters of the common state to mobilise a wide constituency.

Finally, this chapter sheds light on the phenomenon of what will be called "ethnic outbidding" which provided Czech and Slovak elites with a strong incentive to resort to nationalist rhetorics to achieve electoral success. Czech and Slovak elites struggled to appear more supportive of national interests than their competitors, with fatal consequences for the Czechoslovak state.

The break-up of Czechoslovakia: the result of Slovak nationalism ?

Western journalists[619] but also scholars such as Martin Bútora, Zora Bútorová, Minton Goldman, Leslie Holmes, Tatiana Rosová, Soňa Szomolányi, Sabrina Petra Ramet or Otto Ulč have argued that the break-up of Czechoslovakia was the consequence of the reemergence after 1989 of Slovak nationalism[620]. Václav Havel himself once suggested: "[i]t is the Slovaks who are founding the Czech state"[621].

It is undeniable that there was in the immediate aftermath of the "velvet revolution" a widespread wish among the Slovaks to reassert their identity: the "hyphen war" which erupted in the Spring 1990 over the name of the country is a clear example of this, as is the electoral success in June 1990 of the Slovak National Party.

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[619]For an analysis of Western media perceptions of Slovakia, see for instance Adam Burgess, "Writing Off Slovakia to 'East' ?: Examining Charges of Bias in British Press reporting of Slovakia, 1993-1994", *Nationalities Papers*, vol.25, N°4, 1997, pp.659-682

[620]Martin Bútora, Zora Bútorová and Tatiana Rosová, "The Hard Birth of Democracy in Slovakia: The Eighteenth Months Following the 'Tender' Revolution", *The Journal of Communist Studies*, vol.7, n°4, December 1991, pp.435-459; M.F.Goldman, *Slovakia Since Independence* (Westport; London; Praeger; 1999); Leslie Holmes, *Post-Communism: An Introduction* (Cambridge; Polity Press; 1997), p.288; Sabrina Petra Ramet, "The Reemergence of Slovakia", *Nationalities Papers*, vol.22, n°1, 1994, pp.99-117; Szomolanyi, "Was the Dissolution of Czechoslovakia Inevitable ?", p.35; Ulc, "The Bumpy Road", pp.19-33; Ulc, "Czechoslovakia's Velvet Divorce", pp.331-353.

[621]Jacques Rupnik, "1993: L'an I de la République Tchèque", in Edith Lomel and Thomas Schreiber (eds), *L'Europe Centrale et Orientale: stabilisation politique, reprise économique, édition 1994* (Paris; Notes et Etudes Documentaires, La Documentation Française; 1995), p.157.

These two events are significant, if only because they illustrate the determination of the Slovaks, after four decades of communism, to reinterpret and "reinhabit" their history: the demands for the hyphenisation of the name of state were historically grounded in the fact that Czechoslovakia was originally spelt Czecho-Slovakia in the official documents and peace treaties of 1918, before the centralist constitution of 1920 renunced to the hyphen[622].
Similarly, the Slovak National Party (SNP) was created in December 1989 as the alleged heir of the SNP that existed between 1870 and 1938 and constituted a significant political force during the First Czechoslovak republic[623].

To an extent, this repeated invocation of history could appear somewhat paradoxical, given that the Slovaks have commonly been described as a "people without history"[624]: "[t]he history of Slovakia has never been -except in a past so remote that it belongs to quasi-mythical reconstitutions- a Slovak history"[625]. Even the great Slovak (if "Czecho-Slovak" oriented) awakener and poet Jan Kollár wrote in 1846 that "[t]he life of the Slovaks is without history...a numbing emptiness and a spirit-destroying wasteland prevail in their past"[626].
Apart from the short-lived Slovak Republic of 1939-1945, it is hard to find any evidence of Slovak statehood, and therefore the Slovak past has often been prone to "nationalist" interpretations and the creation of a certain number of national myths.
One of the most influential of theses myths that reemerged after the fall of communism is the so-called Great Moravian Empire of the ninth century. As seen in chapter 4, a certain Slovak historiography regarded the medieval kingdom as the first "Slovak state"[627]. In his extremely

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[622]The name of the state was also "hyphenised" during the so-called Second Republic, which lasted from October 1938 to March 1939, and under which the Slovaks achieved a status of autonomy.

[623]Szayna, "Ultra-Nationalism", p.543. See Milan Podrimavský, "The Slovak National Party as a Political Representative of the Slovaks (1871-1914)", *Human Affairs* (Bratislava), vol.7, n°2, 1997, pp.159-166

[624]For a useful discussion of the concept of nation "without history", see Pierré-Caps, *La Multination*, pp.13-52.

[625]Filippini, "'Petite nation'", p.177.

[626]Jan Kollár, Hlasové o potrebe jednoty spolecného jazyka pro Cechy, Moravany a Slováky, p.108, quoted in Pynsent, *Questions of identity*, p.62

[627]See chapter 4, p. 159

controversial *History of Slovakia and the Slovaks*, the Slovak scholar Milan Ďurica even contended that Great Moravia is the origin of the independent Slovak republic established in January 1993: he derived from this that since the whole of Great Moravian Kingdom was Slovak and included what is today Moravia, this latter region is still nowadays a Slovak territory occupied by the Czechs[628]. This "appropriation" is not a recent phenomenon: under the wartime Slovak state, it was common to find Great Moravia simply referred to as the "Slovak Empire"[629]. However, there is no serious evidence concerning Great Moravia which is in any case more likely to have been a state made of several Slavic tribes than a purely Slovak state and, as John Morison put it, "[t]he claims of some contemporary Slovak patriots that [Great Moravia] was the first Slovak state seem to be wide of the mark. Archeological evidence suggests that its capital was in Moravia, perhaps at Mikulcice. Moreover the terms 'Czech' and 'Slovak' were meaningless in those days of predominantly tribal identity"[630].

Having seen that the claims of Slovak scholars that the Great Moravian Empire was a Slovak state are based more on nationalist interpretations of history than on concrete proofs, the Slovaks are mostly left with a history of Hungarian domination -from the fall of the Moravian kingdom until the establishment of Czechoslovakia in 1918.
More importantly, the Czechoslovak state represents, according to a nationalist reading of history, a period of Czech domination on Slovakia.

Therefore, the only period to which the Slovaks could refer to as a testimony of their statehood was the Slovak state of 1939-1945.
As seen in chapter 2, the birthdays of Hlinka, the charismatic leader of the interwar Slovak People's Party and Tiso (executed on 18 April 1947 as a war criminal) were proudly commemorated. Similarly, 14 March, the anniversary of the proclamation of "independence" in 1939, came to be regarded by Slovak nationalists as a landmark of Slovak history.

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[628] as quoted in an interview with Dušan Kovác, *La Nouvelle Alternative*, n°48, December 1997, p.15

[629] Jelinek, *The Parish*, p.82

[630] J.Morison, "The road to separation", in Paul Latawski (ed.), *Contemporary Nationalism in East Central Europe* (Basingstoke, London; Macmillan; 1995), p.67

These celebrations of the wartime Slovak state are deeply problematic because of the dubious nature of its political regime.
Despite the claims of Slovak nationalists that it was merely the expression of the legitimate right of the Slovaks to sovereignty and independence and that its fascist elements were hardly avoidable and even something of a lesser evil given the international context, the Slovak state cannot provide the basis for a Slovak "civic" nationalism. It has rightly been considered as a "watershed in the consolidation of Slovak national self-affirmation"[631] but it also constitutes the most tragic and shameful episode of Slovak history.

Even if the attempts to rehabilitate the Slovak wartime state were probably no more than the fact of a hard-line minority, the post-communist Slovak political life nevertheless became polarised around the "national" question: an objective discussion of historical myths matters very little when leaders are prepared to mobilize them for their own political motives.
What differentiated the different Slovak political parties between 1990 and 1992 was their attitude towards the (vague and ambiguous) concept of Slovak sovereignty. And, by the parliamentary elections of June 1992, the four most important Slovak parties, the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia, the Christian Democratic Movement, the Slovak National Party and the former communists of the Party of the Democratic Left, were, to various degrees, playing the nationalist card -even if only the Slovak National Party openly advocated outright independence[632].

The redefinition of the constitutional and political position of Slovakia quickly reemerged after 1989 as the main item on the agenda of Slovak politicians. This was in itself not a new phenomenon in Czechoslovakia, where Slovak nationalism had regularly reasserted itself: most crucially, in 1938-1939 (when the Slovak Populists decided to ally themselves with Hitler and declared independence) in 1945-1948, when the Slovaks struggled to replace the "Czechoslovakism" of the First republic with the concept of a state of two equal nations ("equal with equal"[633]) and in the Sixties, when the destalinisation of the country allowed

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[631] Leff, *National Conflict*, p.90

[632] Novák, *Une Transition*, p.136. See also chapter 5.

[633] See Jelinek, *The Lust for Power*.

the Slovaks to openly reaffirm their identity, eventually leading to the federalisation of the state in 1969.

Slovak nationalism has been called "unrelenting"[634] and populism has been a constant of Slovak politics: "[a] characteristic of Slovak political life in this century...was the appearance of a charismatic political leader who articulated not just Slovak interests, but above all opposition to non-Slovak interests seen to be imposing their agenda on Slovakia"[635]. Kirschbaum explicitly refers to Hlinka and Tiso, but after 1989, one man became the incarnation of this tradition, Vladimír Mečiar[636]. There is a continuity in Slovak history, which implies that

> [b]y presenting themselves as the interprets of past disappointments, one part of the Slovak political leaders - Hlinka, then Tiso in the interwar period, Husák at the time of the Prague Spring, Mečiar during the post-revolutionary period - ... was able to skilfully mobilise the masses and thus played a great role in the Czecho-slovak polarisation and ...in the setting in motion of the process of disintegration, that Czechoslovakia twice tragically experienced in 1939 and 1992[637].

In this context, Mečiar was undoubtedly the most influential Slovak post-communist politician and his domination of the political stage was only reinforced by the "personalisation" of Slovak politics[638].

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[634]The expression has been used in the context of the First Republic in El Mallakh, *The Slovak autonomy movement, 1935-1939: a study in unrelenting nationalism*

[635]Stanislav J. Kirschbaum, "Dilemmas of Democracy in Slovakia", *Österreichische Osthefte*, Jahrgang. 38, 1996, Heft 4, pp.483-484.

[636]One could also add to the list the names of Vlado Clementis, Ladislav Novomeský or Gustáv Husák, who were tried for bourgois nationalism in the 1950s.

[637]Wehrlé, *Le Divorce*, p.242.

[638]The American scholar David W. Paul talks about a "personality syndrome" to describe the strong identification in Slovakia between political parties and movements and their leaders. He gives the examples of the First republic Slovak parties, who were often better-known by the name of their leaders : Hodža 's party (The Agrarians), Dérer's party (the Social Democrats), Rázus's party (the National Party) and of course Hlinka's Slovak People's party (Paul, *The cultural limits*, p.199).

Mečiar emerged after the Velvet revolution to become Slovak minister of Interior on the recommendation of Dubček. After the first post-communist elections of June 1990, as a member of the winning movement Public Against Violence, he was elected Slovak prime minister. However, his real breakthrough on the Slovak political stage happened on April 1991, when he left Public Against Violence and, dismissed from the post of Prime minister after allegations of corruption, founded his own party, the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia and became the most popular politician in Slovakia.

Mečiar can be qualified as a nationalist and populist to the extent that he adopted a demagogic rhetoric that tended to blame the federal centre and the Czechs for Slovakia's problems.

This could be demonstrated at three different levels: in his economic programme and policies, in his insistence on the concept of the international sovereignty or at least visibility of Slovakia, as well as in his biased and ambiguous use of historical references.

Firstly, Mečiar began to claim, as early as in the Autumn of 1990 that the Scenario for Economic Reform, adopted in September by the federal government and which followed the radical "shock therapy" perspective of the then federal Finance Minister Václav Klaus, was "unsuitable for Slovakia"[639].

Mečiar contended that the economic transition to a market economy engaged under the supervision of the federal authorities did not take enough into account the "specificities" of the Slovak economy. This argument was based on the fact that Slovakia was hit much harder than the Czech lands by the economic reforms and unemployment.

Chapter 3 showed that the notion of a Slovak economic specificity is in practice difficult to prove and rather contestable, but Mečiar was able to exploit the economic fears of the Slovak population. There was among the Slovaks a widespread feeling to be unfairly treated in the process of economic reform[640].

The nationalist option which consisted in blaming the Czechs for the economic problems of Slovakia, was politically viable and Mečiar unambiguously chose to follow this strategy. The

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[639]Robert Young, *The Breakup of Czechoslovakia* (Research Paper N°32, Institute of Intergovernmental Relations, Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario, Canada), p.7.

[640]See Ch.3 ; Petr Pithart, "The Division of Czechoslovakia: A Preliminary Balance Sheet for the End of a Respectable Country", *Canadian Slavonic Papers*, vol.XXXVII, Nos 3-4, Sept-Dec. 1995, p.331.

electoral programme of the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia in June 1992 hence devoted a large place to economic issues and asked for a redefinition of the economic reforms.

Secondly, Mečiar gradually established himself as the most outspoken spokesman for the notion of the international "sovereignty" of Slovakia. He insisted on making Slovakia "visible" on the international stage and his emphasis on the necessity of some form of autonomous international representation and status for Slovakia was one of the main reasons for the failure of the constitutional negotiations after June 1992[641].

Finally, Mečiar did not hesitate to resort to symbolic politics. He exploited national myths, for example when he declared at the ceremony marking the Slovak declaration of sovereignty on 17 July 1992 that the Slovaks had been waiting for this moment "for more than a thousand years" - implicitly relating Slovakia's sovereignty to the times of the Great Moravian Empire[642]. The Slovak constitution ratified in September 1992 (and sponsored by the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia) equally acknowledges in its preamble the "historical legacy of Great Moravia"[643].

Slovak politics seems thus marked by what Marta Simecková calls the " Jánošík tradition"[644]. Jánošík is one of the most popular Slovak heroes, the Slovak Robin Hood, executed in 1713 at Liptovsky Sv. Mikulaš[645]. He has been regarded as the "symbol of the aspiration to freedom of the Slovak nation"[646] but, as Simecková points out, the myth

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[641]Stein, *Czecho/Slovakia.*

[642]CSTK, 17 July 1992, quoted in Obrman, "Slovakia declares sovereignty", p.25.

[643]"Constitution de la République slovaque", in Michel Lesage (ed.), *Constitutions d'Europe centrale, orientale et balte* (Paris; La documentation française; 1995), p.207; Pavel Mates, "The new Slovak constitution", *RFE / RL research report*, vol.1, n°43, 30 October 1992, pp.39-42.

[644]Marta Simecková, "Sie schauen ins Feuer, sagen kein Wort", in John Pattillo-Hess and Mario Smole (eds), *Nationen* (Wien; Löcker Verlag; 1994), p.30.

[645]See for example Paul, *The cultural limits*, p.219

[646]Perréal and Mikuš, *La Slovaquie: une nation*, p.117

conveys a much more ambiguous meaning: the tendency of the Slovaks to rally around politicians perceived as fighting on behalf of the "Nation".

Mečiar was in many respects perceived as a new Jánošík, standing up to Prague and to the Czechs in defence of Slovak interests. During the negotiations with his Czech counterparts Mečiar adopted an uncompromising stance and continuously strove to appear as the *only* legitimate defender of the interests of the Slovak nation. This sometimes implied making claims that he was sure the Czech side could not accept, such as the demand for an independent Slovak membership in the United Nations or a slow down of economic reforms[647]. Typical of Mečiar's attitude was his reaction to the short-lived Treaty of Milový signed in February 1992 and which he considered too centralist: Mečiar called the agreement "a betrayal of the contemporary national movement, a betrayal which is the peak of the evasive tactics of the Democratic Party, of a part of the Christian Democrats, of the Public Against Violence and of the Hungarian Independent Initiative [parties of the Slovak governemental coalition which negotiated the agreement]. They have acted against the interests of Slovakia"[648]. He further added that "[he was] afraid that in order to be able to say that he has done something, Mr Čarnogurský [then Slovak prime minister] sacrificed the basic interests of the Slovak Republic, to be able to present a certain document that he was able to get through. This is not allowed"[649].

Slovak nationalism is of a somewhat paradoxical nature. On the one hand, it largely derives from an inferiority complex of the Slovaks towards their Czech neighbours[650]. The impossibility for the Slovaks to relate to an autonomous history offers a sharp contrast to the Czechs and fosters Slovak nationalism by increasing the importance of myths and symbols in the national psyche. "Contrarily to the Czech lands, evidently present at the heart of the construction of European humanism, Slovakia has some difficulty to find in its past the

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[647]Stein, *Czecho/Slovakia*, p.222

[648]Wehrlé, *Le Divorce*, pp.142-143

[649]FBIS, 18 February 1992, p.11, quoted in Young, *The Breakup*, p.15

[650]Filippini, "'Petite nation'", p.183. "[T]he Slovaks have had something of an inferiority complex toward the Czechs ever since their political merger in 1918, and one of the primary reasons is the Slovaks' lack of a centuries-old cultural heritage comparable to that of the Czechs" (Paul, *Cultural limits*, p.76)

promises of a great culture... The Czech nation has its models and does not even have to resort to myth to historically anchor its revival"[651].

This probably explains why after 1989, several Slovak "symbols" were so forcefully reasserted. As discussed earlier, the question of the "hyphen" illustrates this but the choice of the Slovak double-cross used by the Slovak state in 1939-1945 as the national flag[652], as well as the noticeable process of "Slovakisation" of certain family names and places[653] are equally significant. However, the most potent symbol of Slovak nationalism is perhaps the Slovak language itself.

Historically, as considered in chapter 1, the affirmation of the individuality of the Slovak language has been a decisive feature of Slovak nationalism and after 1989, there was a tendency to reassert the dominant position of the Slovak language in Slovakia, especially in relation to the Hungarian-speaking minority. Two controversial language laws adopted in 1990 and 1995 established Slovak as the official language of the Republic. The 1990 law was in theory favourable to the minorities and granted them the right to use their own language in towns and districts where they constitute 20 % or more of the population[654]. However, the new law passed in November 1995 considerably reduced the linguistic rights of the Hungarian minority and tended to reflect the rise of Slovak "linguistic" nationalism[655] -its article 6 for instance stated that "the Slovak language is the most important symbol of the special character of the Slovak nation, the most precious value of its cultural heritage and the expression of the sovereignty of the Slovak Republic"[656].

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[651]Micheline de Sève, "De la Crispation ethnique à l'Identité Nationale: le cas de la Slovaquie", *Politique et Sociétés*, vol.14, n°28, autumn 1995, p.92.

[652]There are some similarities between Slovakia and Croatia, which adopted as its national flag the heavily compromised "checkered" coat of arms of the Ustasa regime.On the significance of national flags, see Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (eds), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge; Cambridge University Press; 1983).

[653]André Reszler, "Identité nationale et héritage culturel : le cas de la Slovaquie", *Revue d'Europe Centrale*, Tome 1, N°2, 2ème semestre 1993, p.163.

[654]Batt, *The New Slovakia*, p.33

[655]For a discussion of the concept of linguistic nationalism and of its role in Eastern Europe, see Bibó, *Misère*, pp.137-139

[656]quoted in Batt, *The New Slovakia*, pp.32-33

On the other hand, if Slovak nationalism is thus subject to self-doubt and Slovaks often appear to resort to myths to assert their identity, it also seems that Slovak nationalism is based on the belief in the exceptional destiny of the Slovak nation. This is of course not unique to the Slovaks (suffice it to evoke the messianism attached to Polish nationalism[657]), but the self-assurance of the Slovaks differs from the Czech reflective attitude to their national identity:

> [t]he Slovaks appear to have a self-confidence about what a Slovak is which one might compare with that of the English, Scottish or Welsh. They do not appear to need the endless self-defining 'philosophies' of national history that the Czechs have[658].

This is also what the Czech scholar Vladimír Macura acknowledges when he states that "Czechs "often" feel "insecure about their 'conscious identity'...we are not Czechs because we exist... our closest neighbours, the Slovaks, with whom we shared a state for three quarters of a century, have no problems with their identity: they are Slovaks because they are Slovaks"[659].

Slovakia has often been said to experience identity problems following the establishment of the independent state in 1993[660] but the concept of Slovak statehood was in many ways more firmly anchored among the Slovak population than the notion of Czech statehood was among the Czechs. Arista Maria Cirtautas for instance emphasises the relative facility with which the Slovak constitution was drafted in 1992 -especially if compared to the Czech Republic. This did not overshadow the many disturbingly undemocratic ambiguities of the Slovak constitution but, "[al]though the regime emerging in Slovakia promises to be profoundly anti-liberal, it is a regime based on a dominant collective identity and as such has

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[657]For a discussion of the messianistic aspect of nationalism, Adam Zamoyski, *Holy Madness: Romantics, Patriots and Revolutionaries, 1776-1871* (London; Weidenfeld & Nicolson; 1999).

[658]Pynsent, *Questions of identity*, p.152

[659]quoted in Pynsent, *ibid.*, p.152

[660]Batt, *The New Slovakia*, passim.

broken through the institutional stalemate generated by competing elites elsewhere in Eastern Europe"[661]. Significantly, whereas the Slovaks had no problem to find the name of their independent state, the Czechs wrangled for some time in search of a name[662].
This would tend to confirm that Slovak nationalism has been the main cause of a break-up in which Czech nationalism, mostly self-reflective, self-effacing and politically insignificant, has not been a factor.

The emergence of a post-communist Czech nationalism: nationalism with a neo-liberal face ?

In fact, the "very existence of a conscious, purposive [Czech] nationalism, if not as a sense of identity, then as an active force driving politics and policy" has been questioned[663].
Since the days of Palacký and Masaryk, Czech "patriotism" has usually been associated with a more universalist and humanist view of the world. Václav Havel further exemplifies this traditional attitude when he writes that

> [m]y home is the house I live in, the village or town where I was born or where I spend most of my time. My home is my family, the world of my friends, my profession, my company, my workplace. My home, obviously, is also the country I live in, and its intellectual and spiritual climate, expressed in the language spoken there. The Czech language, the Czech way of perceiving the world, the Czech historical experience, the Czech modes of courage and cowardice, Czech humour - all

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[661]Arista Maria Cirtautas, "In Pursuit of the Democratic Interest : the Institutionalization of Parties and Interests in Eastern Europe", in Christopher G.A Bryant and Edmund Mokrzycki (eds.), *The New Great Transformation: Change and Continuity in East-Central Europe* (London, New York; Routledge; 1994), p.50

[662]Bohemia-Moravia, "Cesko","Velká Morava" (Great Moravia), "Cesko-Moravska" or "Cesko-Moravska-Slezska republika" (Czech-Moravian-Silesian Republic) were presented as alternatives to "Czech Republic". See for instance Susan Greenberg, "A splitting headache", *The Guardian*, 28 August 1992, p.19 ; Jan Zielonka, *Security in Central Europe* (London; Brassey's for IISS; Adelphi Papers n°271; 1992), p.3.

[663]Leff, "Czech and Slovak Nationalism", p.134

> of these are inseparable from that circle of my home. My home is therefore my Czechness, my nationality, and I see no reason at all why I shouldn't embrace it since it is as essential a part of me as, say, my masculinity, another stratum of my home. My home is not only my Czechness, of course; it is also my Czechoslovakness, which means my citizenship. Beyond that, my home is Europe and my Europeanness and - ultimately - it is this world and its present civilization and for that matter the universe.[664]

However, the "cosmopolitan" Havel can hardly been seen as representative of the average Czech and the theory according to which the break-up of Czechoslovakia in 1992 was solely the consequence of Slovak nationalist separatism is reductionist and fails to acknowledge that the reemergence of nationalism after the fall of communism was not a strictly Slovak phenomenon, but also an integral part of the Czech political landscape[665].

One of the most evident manifestations of Czech nationalism after 1989 was the electoral showing of the Republican Party. Sládek 's rhetoric included references to the necessity of the maintenance of Czechoslovakia, anti-Gypsy and anti-German slogans as well as demands for the reannexation of Transcarpathian Ukraine by the Czech state. These elements which tended to make from the Republican Party "the ultimate protest group"[666] would therefore also appear to allow us to define it as "nationalist".
However, the impact or influence of the Republicans on Czech political life has remained marginal (the party did not manage to gain representation in the 1998 parliamentary elections) and should therefore not be overestimated.

More indicative of the strength of the Czech national sentiment is the use that mainstream political parties made of nationalism. Following the June 1992 elections, in the Czech

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[664]Havel, *Summer Meditations*, pp.30-31

[665]For an article which forcefully makes this point, see Sigurd Hilde, "Slovak Nationalism", pp.647-655. This section limits itself to a discussion of Czech nationalism in the context of the post-1989 democratic transition (for a general assessment of Czech nationalism, see ch.2).

[666]Szayna, "Ultra-Nationalism", p.542

Republic, the winning Civic Democratic Party (CDP) led by Klaus formed a government with the Civic Democratic Alliance (CDA) and the Christian Democratic Party (KDS), two parties which could be said to have based their electoral success on the defence of Czech national interests.

The CDA advocated the idea of a unitary state and took an uncompromising stance towards Slovak constitutional demands. Daniel Kroupa, the vice-chairman of the party, declared that the federation was not viable any longer because of its adhesion to the "harmful" principle of protection against the majority[667] and the CDA therefore asked for a removal of the prohibition of majority rule, described as a "communist conceit" and "allegedly incompatible with membership in the European Union[668]. In fact, it has been suggested that the electoral position of the CDA as "the one mainstream champion of Czech nationalism"[669] was the main reason why the party narrowly managed to poll more than 5 percent of the required votes to gain representation in the Czech National Council (it failed to win any seats in the Federal Assembly)[670].

Similarly, the Christian Democratic Party pressed for a separation on the grounds that Slovakia had become a burden and an hindrance to the success of the democratic transition in the Czech republic. According to the KDS, the political developments in Slovakia demonstrated the lack of democratic traditions of the Slovaks and the only solution for the Czech republic was to go on its own[671]. Václav Benda, the chairman of the party, summed up the general approach of the KDS towards the common state in an interview he gave to *Lidové Noviny* on 1 September 1992 where he contended, talking about the June 1992 elections: "[i]n the Czech Republic, the democratic forces won a victory over the non-

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[667]Milan Znoj, "The Ideology of Czech Innocence", *Telos*, n°94, Winter 1992-1993, p.159.

[668]Stein, *Czecho/Slovakia*, p.146 and 149.

[669]Innes, *The Break-up*, p.25

[670]Znoj, "The Ideology", p.159. Being perceived as the defender of Czech national interests allowed the CDA to differentiate itself from the ideologically close and more powerful CDP. Abbey Innes however argues that, on the contrary, the failure of the CDA to enter the Federal Assembly can be ascribed to the fact that "ethnic animosity toward Slovakia as such (as opposed to conflicts over constitutional arrangement) was discouraged by the electorate" (*ibid.*, p.5).

[671]see for example, Znoj, *ibid.*, pp.160-161

democratic crypto-communist left... But in the Slovak Republic, 85 per cent of mandates were won by nationalistically or even separatistically oriented, predominantly left-wing, and strongly anti-reformist parties. The election results confronted us basically with the decision of whether we want another relapse of socialism in a common state or a democratic development in an independent Czech Republic"[672].

However, the main carrier of Czech nationalism was in many respects the Civic Democratic Party itself.

Behind his declared adhesion to practical politics and his refusal of the former socialist dogma as well as of the "antipolitics" of the former dissidents, Václav Klaus made extensive use of "nationalist" images and myths.

In several speeches, he tried to put his political actions in the broader context of Czech historical and national traditions. For example, in an address he gave on 28 September 1992, Saint-Václav (Wenceslas)'s Day, Klaus related the Western-oriented attitude of his government and his policies of a fast "return to Europe" to the deeds of the medieval Czech king and national saint, assassinated in 935. He described Václav as:

> a prince basically more humane and educated than were his still semi-barbarian surroundings; a prince, who, in the spirit of the faith that he took literally and seriously, to the letter, strove to elevate and cultivate these surroundings; who felt that from the West come not only attackers and conquerors but also, perhaps primarily, bearers and communicators of values in which the life of the individual and the existence of the state can be reliably anchored [...]. It is a tradition of Czech statehood - I emphasize Czech and I emphasize statehood. It is a Christian tradition that pushes certain values to the fore, such as humaneness and culture. It is a tradition linked with Europe[673].

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[672]Lidové Noviny, 1 September 1992, quoted in Holy, *The Little*, p.113

[673]Václav Klaus, *Rok-Málo ci mnoho v dejinách zeme*, p.68, quoted in Kieran Williams, "National Myths in the New Czech Liberalism", in Geoffrey Hosking and George Schöpflin (eds), *Myths and Nationhood* (London; Hurst & Company; 1997), p.137.

After the achievement of independence in January 1993, Klaus still resorted to national mythological figures, for instance in a speech in September 1993, in which he "suggested that he was the new forefather Cech, surveying the glittering Promised Land of a successfully transformed society"[674].
He emphasised the continuity of the Czech protestant and Hussite tradition by attending the ceremonies commemorating the death of Jan Hus on 5 July 1993[675].

More fundamentally, Klaus's vision of the Czech "return to Europe" via the unconditional adoption of capitalism and free-market, "right-wing" economic principles masks a "nationalist" reading of Czech history, which perceives the Czech nation as having a "mission". As Kieran Williams explains,

> Klaus makes pronoucements that conform perfectly to myths of national mission. He tells his countrymen that they can make a great contribution to Europe just by being a free people. What this means is that Czechs, located, (he claims) equidistant to Maastricht and Sarajevo, can use their experience of Communism to warn the world against the contructivist conceit. In particular, Czechs can warn Europe against the dangers of the trend that Klaus claims to see in the West of pursuing vaguely left-wing, interventionist policies, both nationally and supranationally in Brussels[676].

Klaus's political success marked at first sight a rupture in Czech politics, given the absence of right-wing tradition in the Czech lands[677]. There are a few Czech historical figures representative of a conservative tradition, such as Rieger, Kaizl, Rašín[678], Kramář and Pekař,

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[674]Kieran Williams, *ibid.*, pp.136-137

[675]Rupnik, "1993: L'an I ", pp.160-161

[676]K.Williams, "National Myths", p.139

[677]Marès, "Ruptures et Continuités", p.79.

[678]Alois Rašín (1867-1923) was the first Finance minister of the Czechoslovak republic in 1918 and conducted a policy of economic and financial austerity. Klaus explicitly acknowledges him as one of his intellectual inspirations (Interview of Václav Klaus, "Tchécoslovaquie: l'art des privatisations", *Politique Internationale*, n°53, autumn 1991, p.216).

but they never achieved the symbolic importance and impact of leaders like Masaryk[679] or even Beneš[680], who upheld principles close to the social-democratic (non-Marxist) doctrines[681]. Moreover, it is also possible to consider the establishment of a Communist regime in Czechoslovakia in 1948 as the outcome of a certain indigenous Czech (but not Slovak) leftitst political subculture as much as the result of the external intervention of Stalin's Soviet Union[682].

One factor that explains why Klaus's liberalism emerged as the dominant force in the post-communist Czech Republic was the widespread rejection after four decades of communism of this "leftist-communist" tradition. More precisely, the crushing of the Prague Spring reforms by the Warsaw Pact troops in August 1968 put an end to the credibility of the idea of a "socialism with a human face". Klaus and his colleague Ježek could hence confidently claim in 1989 that "[t]he faulty dreams from the sixties about the Third Way or 'socialism with a human face' were definitely forgotten. What remained is our clear understanding that the market is not divisible, that it is not an instrument in the experienced hands of central planners, and that the invisible hand of the market is much better than the visible hand of the central planners"[683].

For all these reasons, by early 1992, the Civic Democratic Party and its allies of the Civic Democratic Alliance had come to represent a rather outspoken position in defence of Czech national interests in opposition to what they identified as the excessive willingness on the part

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[679]François Fejtö describes Masarykism as a "radical-socialist" movement, mixing "progressist idealism, free-mason inspiration, practical spirit, respect of authority and individualism" (*Le Coup de Prague 1948*; Paris; Editions du Seuil; 1976; p.52)

[680]For an insight on Beneš's political ideas, see for example Z.Zeman, *The Life of Edvard Beneš.*

[681]See for example Pauer, "Der tschechische Liberalkonservativismus", pp.11-15

[682]See ch.2; Rupnik, *Histoire.*

[683]Václav Klaus and Tomáš Ježek, "Social criticism, False Liberalism, and Recent Changes in Czechoslovakia", *East European Politics and Societies*, vol.5, N°1, Winter 1991, p.40.

of some federal and Czech politicians to conciliate Slovak nationalism at the expense of the federation and the Federal government's economic policies"[684].

Czech nationalism, meaning the awareness and defence of Czech national interests (as opposed to Slovak or "Czechoslovak" national interests) thus became an important component of post-communist politics.

Ultimately, it is therefore necessary to refute at least partially the idea that the division of the state was the outcome of Slovak nationalism. There was undoubtedly after 1989 an upsurge of Slovak nationalism, but Czech nationalism (mostly as a reaction to Slovak nationalism) was decisive in bringing about the break-up of Czechoslovakia. A symptomatic manifestation of the impact of Czech nationalism was the fact that most Czechs tended to blame the Slovaks for the division of the state and became convinced that Slovak nationalism would only be satisfied at the price of the federation. This state of mind incited the Czechs to strive for a Czech, and not Czechoslovak, statehood, deemed likely to enhance legitimate specifically Czech interests . Milan Znoj for instance stated:

> there is such a thing as Czech nationalism. One of its remarkable masks is the *ideology of Czech innocence*, which played its part in ending the Czechoslovak federation. Central to this ideology is the thesis that "the Slovaks destroyed the federation with their nationalism".[685]

One of the most typical exponents of this point of view was the Czech intellectual Ludvík Vaculík, who, in an influential and controversial article entitled "Our Slovak Question" ("*Naše slovenská otázka*") published in the daily *Literární Noviny* on 3 May 1990, argued:

> By severance from the Slovaks, which is solely at our will, we will forfeit -judging by previous experience- economic losses. Politically we will forfeit the Hungarian and Ruthenian problems. We will place yet another boundary between ourselves and the Soviet Union. We will have only one government. All matters will finally be

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[684]Batt, "Czechoslovakia" in S.Whitefield, *The new Institutional Architecture*, p.42

[685]Znoj, "The Ideology", p.158 (emphasis added)

resolvable quickly and pertinently, without special regard for the Slovaks. Without the occasion for the eruption of national disputes, we can perhaps introduce democratic forms and methods more quickly. By ourselves we can undoubtedly catch up faster with the more developed states. We will have more peace in the search for a life-style resistant to aggressive commerce and consumption...Let us consider whether we can't gain from the Slovak stimulus our own favorable opportunity to start a new life. After three centuries of Habsburg subjection and seventy years of oppressing another nation [we would] live with a clean conscience and new horizons. As a matter of fact, everything would be different ! [686].

While Slovak nationalism has been diversely described as a "minority nationalism"[687] or the nationalism of the "small nation"[688], Czech nationalism was able to take the perhaps more respectable face of the nationalism of a "dominant nation" since, for the huge majority of the Czechs, their nation had already been sovereign since the creation of the Czechoslovak state in 1918[689].

There was a widespread confusion between Czechoslovak and Czech statehood and as late as 1991, Havel could still safely declare that "the idea of Czech statehood ... has very little resonance in the Czech lands of Bohemia and Moravia...so completely is the idea of Czech statehood identified in people's minds with the idea of Czechoslovak statehood that to many a separate Czech state makes no sense at all".[690]

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[686]quoted and translated by Leff, "Czech and Slovak Nationalism", p.111.

[687]Stanislav J. Kirschbaum defines "minority nationalism" as "the awareness of an ethnic group to wish to work towards its own goals and to translate this awareness into political revendications, which do not necessarily lead to separatism, but rather to the transformation of the State... separatism can become the ultima ratio ; its realisation would indicate the failure of the State to adapt itself to minority nationalism" ("Le nationalisme minoritaire : le cas de la Tchécoslovaquie" (*Canadian Journal of Political Science/revue Canadienne de Science Politique*, vol.7, n°2, June 1974, p.250)

[688]Filippini, "'Petite nation'".

[689]Holy, *The Little Czech*, p.7 ; see also Jan Rychlík, "The Development of the Consciousness of the Czechs and Slovaks and its Political Consequences", in Armand Clesse and Andrei Kortunov (eds), *The Political and Strategic Implications of the State Crises in Central and Eastern Europe* (Luxembourg; Institute for European and International Studies; 1993), p.274.

[690]Havel, *Summer Meditations*, p.29.

In a similar spirit, Vaculík summed up the nature of the assimilation made by the Czechs between Czechoslovak and Czech statehood in the following way:

> My frame of reference was the whole Czechoslovak territory; all Slovaks were Czechoslovaks to me; I set great store by the Czechoslovak state course for the long run, as well as the Czechoslovak flag and the two-part anthem, which they sang here in Prague last year as one song. The Czech state did not exist for me, Czech symbols and circumscribed Czech interest recede. I think that the majority of us are this kind of "bad" Czech[691].

In fact, "until 1990, the Czechoslovak state was sufficiently Czech to satisfy potential Czech nationalists"[692] but under the pressure of Slovak nationalism after 1989, there was now room for a specifically Czech nationalism.
The break-up of the Czechoslovak state was therefore speeded up by the absence of a "Czechoslovak" nationalism, which could have acted as a counterweight to Slovak and Czech nationalisms.

The riddle of "Czechoslovak" nationalism

The immediate aftermath of communism saw the upsurge of both Slovak and Czech nationalisms, which pursued goals implicitly or explicitly contrary to the maintenance of the Czechoslovak state.

This might come as a surprise, since, as shown in chapter 6, opinion polls conducted between 1990 and 1992 showed the consistent support of the Czech and Slovak population for the preservation of a common state and to an extent, the application of the principle of self-determination, so often invoked by Slovak but also Czech politicians, would have tended to

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[691] Ludvík Vaculík, "Our Slovak Question", quoted in Leff, "Czech and Slovak Nationalism", pp.108-109.

[692] Wehrlé, *Le Divorce.*, p.103

ensure the continuing existence of Czechoslovakia. As Alfred Cobban stated, "a genuine desire for union ... [could be said to be] quite as legitimate an expression of self-determination as the desire for separation"[693].

But, beyond this, the root of the problem seems to be that there was after 1989 no "Czechoslovak" nationalism.

The absence of a Czechoslovak-oriented nationalism is in no way a new phenomenon, and as early as 1969, Joseph F. Zacek contended that "[i]t is unhappily apparent that a "Czechoslovak nation", a single community composed of the majority of Czechs and Slovaks, sharing a "Czechoslovak national consciousness", and asserting a "Czechoslovak nationalism", has never really existed"[694]. As a survey conducted between 28 May and 16 June 1991 demonstrates, Czechs and especially Slovaks, did not relate to a Czechoslovak identity. Even if 71 percent of the Czechs also thought of themselves as "Czechoslovak", 74 percent of the Slovaks did not consider themselves "Czechoslovak". Furthermore, 61 percent of the Slovaks who declared themselves "Czechoslovak" still predominantly regarded their Slovak identity as more important than being Czechoslovak[695].

The lack of a widespread feeling of a "Czechoslovak" identity among the population had two implications as far as the break-up of the state is concerned.

First of all, it was one of the factors[696] that made it difficult, if not impossible, for the opponents of the split to channel a high level of support for the maintenance of the Czechoslovak state. Czechs and Slovaks were not favourable to the break-up but they were not ready to mobilise themselves in the name of a "Czechoslovak" ideal. This explains why the appeals of President Havel to save the federation only received a lukewarm backing, as

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[693]Cobban, *The Nation State*, p.263 ; see also Pierré-Caps, *La Multination*, p.152

[694]Joseph F. Zacek, "Nationalism in Czechoslovakia", in Peter F.Sugar and Ivo J.Lederer (eds), *Nationalism in Eastern Europe* (Seattle, London; University of Washington Press; 1969), p.166

[695]Seemingly confirming the "assimilation" between Czech and Czechoslovak identities, 55 percent of the Czechs who described themselves as "Czechoslovaks" considered being Czechoslovak more important than being Czech (AISA, *Czechs and Slovaks*, p.30) .

[696]One other factor that will be examined in the next chapter of this dissertation is the general political apathy of the population, one of the legacies of communism.

well as why the organisation of pro-Czechoslovak manifestations, on the model of the demonstrations that accompanied the fall of communism and were characteristic of the velvet revolution, failed to materialise. Ján Čarnogurský remarks that "some organizations in both countries tried to organize protests against the split in Autumn 1992, but their meetings were poorly attended -only a few hundred turned out or, in the best case, between two or three thousand. Trade union leaders raised the possibility in October 1992 of a general strike against the split but the idea found no response among workers and was quickly abandoned"[697].

However, the absence of "Czechoslovak" consciousness also had a more positive consequence, since "no group in the state felt intensely enough about its continuance to raise violent objections to its demise"[698].

From a broader point of view, the absence of a "Czechoslovak" nationalism served to emphasise the fact that Czech and Slovak nationalisms had a intrinsic appeal and dynamics that could be matched only with difficulty. As Havel reminded,

> [p]opular outrage is systematically directed against federal institutions as the alleged source of every kind of misery in life, while the good work they do for all citizens in both republics is passed over in silence. It is so easy and, at the same time, so irresponsible to garner applause by declaring in some public square that Slovakia has been robbed by the federation. If I were to call out in a Czech square that the federation is robbing the Czechs, I would no doubt be applauded as well[699].

The nationalists-separatists were only a minority, but they were the most vocal and organised of Czech and Slovak post-communists groups[700]. Moreover, Czech and Slovak media largely played up the increasing tensions between the two nations.

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[697]Ján Čarnogurský, "The hesitant way to independence", *Scottish Affairs*, n°8, Summer 1994, p.29

[698]Leff, *The Czech*, p.139

[699]Havel, *Summer meditations*, p.41

[700]Ramet, "The reemergence", p.108

The "electoral use" of nationalism

The use of nationalist themes in post-communist Czechoslovakia was not the outcome of the deeply-felt convictions of the new elites, but the consequence of the electoral appeal of populist slogans.

Mečiar and Klaus were more "pragmatists" than "nationalists": they resorted to nationalist rhetoric but did so primarily out of political (electoral) interests.

The evolution of Mečiar's attitudes towards the federation could thus almost read as a lesson in political opportunism. Mečiar is only what Kusý calls an "occasional" nationalist, which uses nationalism "when he needs it and throws it away when he does not"[701].

He started off by advocating a federation with confederative elements, but, by the summer of 1991, came to campaign for a confederation of two "sovereign", (subject of international law) republics.

In 1990, he could still appear as one of the moderate Slovak politicians and overtly repeated his intention to advance Slovak interests within the framework of the federation[702]. In August, he declared: "[w]e reject the accusations of trying to destroy the Czechoslovak federation. if we want to destroy something, it is centralism and bureaucracy. We want to change the federation to a better and more effective model"[703]. He equally firmly asserted that "[a] split in the country must not occur, we see how nationalism develops in the USSR or Yugoslavia"[704].

The turning point in Mečiar's thinking seems to have been April 1991, when, ousted from the post of Slovak prime minister, he came to realise that becoming the champion of the Slovak cause was the fastest and easiest way to get back to power, and founded the Movement for a

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[701]Miroslav Kusý, "Always Ready to Wave the Flag", (translated from "V. Mečiar je cistý pragmatik", in *Lidové Noviny*, 16 /06 / 1992, p.8), *The Guardian*, 17 July 1992.

[702]See for example Václav Žák, " The Velvet Divorce: Institutional Foundations", in Musil, *The End*, p.254 ; Stein, *Czecho/Slovakia,* p.62

[703]Ramet, "The Reemergence"., p.103

[704]Svobodne Slovo, 20.08.1990, quoted in Innes, *The Break-Up*, p.19

Democratic Slovakia on a much more nationalist platform: "[w]hen he was forced into opposition, only one path was left for [Mečiar] to fight successfully a return to power, the national one"[705].

Mečiar followed the lead of several other influential Slovak leaders which started to put the Slovak question on top of the agenda. Ján Čarnogurský, the chairman of the Slovak Christian Democrats (KDM), for instance played the "sorcerer's apprentice"[706], first fueling nationalist feelings by promoting the idea of a state treaty between the two constituent republics of Slovakia and choosing to resign from his position of deputy federal prime minister after the first parliamentary elections of June 1990 to concentrate his political activities in Slovakia[707]. The use by the Slovak Christian Democrats of the "national" question proved electorally successful, since by the municipal elections of November 1990, the KDM was (briefly) the most popular party in Slovakia, winning 27 percent of the votes and overtaking Public Against Violence: this probably constituted an incentive for other politicians to adopt the same strategy[708].

What characterised Mečiar appears to be not his nationalist convictions, but his political pragmatism. As Sabrina Petra Ramet states, "[Mečiar] had been striking a careful balance. On the one hand, he had repeatedly avowed his commitment to the federation and had eschewed any endorsement of separatism whatsoever. On the other hand, he had stressed nationalist concerns and had won for himself personally the strong and enthusiastic approval of Slovakia's nationalist groups. Thus, many people thought that Mečiar was 'really' a separatist. But Mečiar's tactics were too convoluted to allow his protests to be taken at face value"[709].

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[705]Zdenek Jicinský, "Das Scheitern der tschechoslowakischen Föderation" in Kipke and Vodicka, *Abschied*, p.70

[706]de Candole, *Czechoslovakia*, p.11

[707]Stein, *Czecho/Slovakia.*, p.67

[708]James de Candole however points out a difference between Mečiar and Čarnogurský: according to him, Čarnogurský seems to have shared nationalist feelings, whereas Mečiar skilfully exploited them. (*Czechoslovakia*, p.11)

[709]S.Ramet, "The Reemergence", p.107

Similarly, the case of Václav Klaus is just as illustrative of a discrepancy between rhetoric and practical actions. Behind his unconditional and unreserved advocacy of free market policies, tainted by nationalist images, Klaus's actual policies were much more socially-oriented: as Peter Rutland writes, "Klaus is much more a pragmatist than an ideologue. He uses the rhetoric of neoliberalism, while pursuing a more nuanced economic policy that preserves social harmony"[710]. Thus, in practice, bankruptcy laws were not implemented[711] and the Czechs still benefited from a elaborate system of social protection and a "very generous" social safety net[712].

Klaus politically exploited the widespread support among the Czechs for a rapid "return to Europe", and managed to translate it into economic terms with the underlying message: "only economic reforms based on neoliberal principles will take us back into Europe". The name of Klaus was therefore linked for many Czechs with the success of the economic transition to capitalism. Klaus's policies were -deliberately or not- conducive to the constitution of a solid electoral constituency in the Czech Republic: the most significant example of this is probably the so-called voucher or coupon privatisation. By directly and massively involving the population in the privatisation process, Klaus gained the potential support of many Czechs, who now had an economic interest in the success of his reforms. This was further enhanced by the fact that Klaus's signature appeared on each of the coupon books purchased by more than 8.5 millions Czechoslovak citizens (among them 5,9 millions Czechs) during the first wave of large privatisations in 1992[713]. In an interview with the Spanish daily *El Pais*, Klaus acknowledged: "the reform in Czechoslovakia is linked with my name" (and this even included a television series called *The Therapy of Klaus*).[714]

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[710]Peter Rutland, "Thatcherism, Czech-style: Transition to Capitalism in the Czech Republic", *Telos*, n°94, Winter 1992-1993, p.103.

[711]Rutland notes that a bankruptcy Law "was introduced in October 1991, but not a single sizeable [firm] has been liquidated and the right of creditors to force closure only came into effect in April 1993". (*ibid.*, p.114)

[712]Marie Frydmanova and Hana Zelenkova, "Creation and Development of a social safety net", in Krovák, *Current*, p.224.

[713]Eric Magnin, "La Trajectoire Tchèque de transformation économique post-socialiste : une approche par la complexité", *Revue d'Etudes Comparatives Est-Ouest*, 1996, n°1 (March), p.46. See also P.Rutland, "Thatcherism", pp.114-115.

[714]Interview with Klaus, "Yo estoy curando a la gente después de 40 anos", *El Pais*, 21 July 1991, p.8

Therefore, Czech and Slovak post-communist nationalisms are best seen as a "means of conflict" rather than as a "cause of conflicts" between Czechs and Slovaks[715]. The hardships associated with the economic, political and social transitions from communism to democracy allowed the new Slovak and Czech elites to exploit nationalism as an electorally-rewarding tool, even it is hard to find evidence of a deeply-entrenched hatred between Czechs and Slovaks[716].

Nationalism as a self-reinforcing process

Czech and Slovak politicians set in motion a dynamic that they could ultimately not control. As Havel made clear:

> [Slovak nationalism] is playing with fire, and it's a game that provokes Czech politicians to do the same, thus further provoking the Slovaks. It is a vicious circle driven more by vanity and spite than by an interest in the truth. It no longer matters who started it; all those who indulge in it, without exception, are trifling with the lives of the citizens[717].

Slovak nationalism was the first to reemerge after the fall of communism, but it was quickly (and somewhat logically) followed by a similar reassertion of Czech national identity, if only as a reaction to the political developments in Slovakia. Ultimately, it was the Czech delegation led by Klaus which took the final decision to divide the state, since it appears that Mečiar might have been bluffing during the negotiations in the belief that Klaus would be willing to make concessions to save the common state. As Stein states, " Mečiar ... did not

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[715]Blanka Richova, "The Disintegration of States-Myth of Nationalism: The Case of Czechoslovakia", in Clesse and Kortunov, *The Political*, p.294

[716]Leff, *The Czech*, p.142

[717]Havel, *Summer Meditations*, p.41

have in mind ending the common state. Indeed, to hold his popular support and affirm his political power..., Mečiar needed the common state, first as an enemy, the 'Prago-centered' bully imposing a socially 'disastrous' economic policy on Slovakia, and, second, as a source of federal funds required for the conversion of the obsolete arms industry and for economic transformation generally. His tactic was predicated on a continuing negotiation and the belief that the Czechs, Klaus included, would blink when finally faced with the prospect of a complete split"[718].

Mečiar thus made unsucessful eleventh-hour attempts -such as the project of a Czech-Slovak union which suddenly and rather mysteriously emerged on 21 August 1992 from the offices of his party, the MDS -to secure some form of constitutional association between Slovakia and the Czech Republic.

Conclusion

Nationalism became a major dimension of Slovak and Czech post-communist political life. This development was not so much due to an intrinsic nationalistically-oriented resentment between Czechs and Slovaks, as to a political context favourable to "ethnic outbidding" -i.e, "a situation where competing elites try to position themselves as the best supporters of a particular ethnic group's interests, each accusing the others of being too weak on ethnic nationalist issues"[719].

In other words, what came to prevail between 1990 and 1993 was intra-republican elite competition: in Slovakia between Czechoslovak-oriented Slovaks and "nationalist" Slovaks, and in the Czech republic, between Czechs favourable to the common state and Czechs who declared themselves not willing to sacrifice what was perceived as Czech national interests to reach a *modus vivendi* with the Slovaks.

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[718]Stein, *Czecho/Slovakia*, p.222 ; see also Young, *The Breakup*, p.12

[719]Stephen M.Saideman, "The dual dynamics of disintegration: ethnic politics and security dilemmas in Eastern Europe", *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, vol.2, n°1, Spring 1996, pp.20-21

And, as a result of the electoral appeal of nationalism, moderate politicians advocating the maintenance of the federation, like the Slovak federal prime minister from January 1990 to June 1992 Marian Čalfa or Petr Pithart who was Czech prime minister until June 1992, were often side-lined and branded as "traitors", accused of not taking the interests of their respective nations into consideration.
Every issue became heavily "ethnicised" and considered from the "national" angle and the use of nationalist myths and half-truths "provide[d] a 'transcendent' perspective on the present, categorize[d] social problems, and bestow[ed] on them relevance, meaning, and moral value. They effortlessly relieve[d] one of the need to exercise common sense or to take any responsability, and they offer[ed] ready identification of those who bear the blame"[720].

By June 1992 and the second post-communist parliamentary elections, Czechoslovak political life was polarised around the national question - "us" (the Czechs or the Slovaks) against "them" (the "other" nation)[721] - and the confrontation of Czech and Slovak nationalisms with contradictory objectives had definitively established a pattern of mutual scapegoating.
Such process was actually made even easier since Czechoslovakia was a binational state, where Czechs and Slovaks tended to define their respective identities in direct contrast to the identity of the other nation of the state[722] and where there existed no strong feeling of a "Czechoslovak" identity, which could have fostered a civic "Czechoslovak" nationalism.

This chapter has thus endeavoured to demonstrate that nationalism undoubtedly played a significant role in the break-up of Czechoslovakia. It has also tried to refute the argument that the division of the state was solely the result of Slovak nationalism after 1989, by emphasizing the existence of a Czech nationalism, essentially under the perhaps more subtle and disguised shape of Klaus's neo-liberalism.
However, our conclusions have to be nuanced by two considerations.

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[720]Jiří Kabele, "Czechoslovakia", in Hans-Peter Neuhold, Peter Havlik and Arnold Suppan (eds), *Political and Economic Transformation in East Central Europe* (Boulder, London; Westview Press; 1995), pp.78-79.

[721]Holy, *The Little Czech*, p.9

[722]This point will be developed in Chapter 9.

Firstly, this chapter has deliberately adopted an intrumentalist approach to nationalism, by stressing the extent to which the political elites can manipulate national sentiments to achieve their political and electoral objectives[723]. This could however be a somewhat reductionist and partial view, since there were also, as previous chapters of this dissertation demonstrated, some manifest historically-based grievances between Czechs and Slovaks, that made credible and possible ethnic outbidding.

Secondly, as suggested by Kusý's quotation in introduction to this chapter, the reemergence of nationalism in post-communist Czechoslovakia cannot be understood without referring to the ambiguous links between communism and nationalism.
The next chapter therefore analyses the impact of legacies of communism on the break-up, and more specifically investigates why nationalism became the "highest stage of communism"[724].

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[723]See for instance the discussion by Daniele Conversi of the debate instrumentalism / primordialism in "Reassessing current Theories of Nationalism: Nationalism as Boundary Maintenance and Creation", *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, Vol.1, n°1, Spring 1995, pp.73-85. I would tend to adopt on this matter Anthony D. Smith 's ethno-symbolic approach, which "aims at overcoming the distinction between primordialism and instrumentalism by rejecting the axiom that nations may be *ipse facto* invented and that nationalism may be a purely a product of elite manipulation. Although nations are a modern phenomenon, they rely on a pre-existing texture of myths, memories, values, and finally, symbols" (pp.73-74)

[724]Rupnik, *L'Autre Europe*, p.412

CHAPTER 8
THE LEGACIES OF COMMUNISM AND THE BREAK-UP OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA

> The traditions of all the dead generations weigh like a nightmare on the brain of the living
>
> Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*[725]

> The struggle to overcome nationalism in the communist movement is the most important task of Marxist-Leninists
>
> The Great Soviet Encyclopedia[726]

The fall of the communist regimes in Eastern Europe has been accompanied by the rapid disintegration of the three communist-run ethnofederations, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union. This has often been taken as evidence that the impossibility to overcome the legacies of communism was the most important reason for the break-up of the three multinational states.

The purpose of this chapter however is not to adopt a systematic comparative approach, but merely to consider how the specific case study of Czechoslovakia could be said to confirm or, on the contrary, disprove this hypothesis.
In other words, we will try to critically assess the relevance of the argument according to which, as for instance Bernard Michel put it, "what has provoked the fall of ...Czechoslovakia

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[725]Karl Marx, *Der achtzehnte Brumaire des Louis Napoleon*, in Karl Marx-Friedrich Engels, *Werke: Band 8* (Berlin; Dietz Verlag; 1972), p.115

[726]quoted in Walker Connor, *The National Question in Marxist-Leninist Theory and Strategy* (Princeton; Princeton University Press; 1984), p.xiii.

is not the rejection of the peace treaties of 1919-1920... What has killed [it]...is communism"[727].

This would indeed come as a further implicit refutation of the idea earlier exposed of the inevitability of the break-up of a state doomed from the start because of the fundamental political, socio-cultural and economic divergences between its two constituent nations, the Czechs and the Slovaks.

Our (provisional) alternative hypothesis would therefore assert that the division of the Czechoslovak state in 1992 was the result of four decades of totalitarian and post-totalitarian communist rule, which disallowed genuine initiatives for cooperation and integration, and during which Czechs and Slovaks became increasingly alienated from one another and eventually openly voiced their mutual grievances after the velvet revolution.

A first section looks at the economic, political, "semantic" and, perhaps most importantly, "institutional" legacies of communism in Czechoslovakia, and the way they have negatively affected the prospects of a resolution of the Czech-Slovak conflict between 1989 and 1992. The built-in flaws of the Soviet-style federalism "imported" to Czechoslovakia in the aftermath of the crushing of the Prague Spring accordingly receives special treatment.

The second section - following (but chronologically preceding) the emphasis of the previous chapter on the reemergence of nationalism in post-communist Czechoslovakia - considers the ambiguous links between communist and nationalist ideologies in the Czechoslovak context. The Czechoslovak Communist Party, despite its official commitment to internationalism, often exploited for opportunistic reasons Czech and Slovak national feelings. The communist regime adopted a strategy of "divide to rule" that made it even more difficult after 1989 to reach a satisfying compromise between the aspirations of the two nations.

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[727]Michel, *Nations et nationalismes*, p.210 ; see also his article, "Tchécoslovaquie: le Divorce de Velours", pp.27-37. See also for example: Anton Bebler, "Das Schicksal des kommunistischen Föderalismus: Sowjetunion, Tschechoslowakei und Jugoslawien im Vergleich", *Europa-Archiv*, Folge 13, 47.Jahrgang., 10.7.1992; Peter Ferdinand, "Nationalism", pp.466-489; Ferdinand Kinsky, "La Reconstruction de l'Ordre Politique Européen", in *Les Données nouvelles de la Sécurité en Europe: L'impact de la réunification Allemande* (Monaco; Académie de la Paix et de la Sécurité Internationale; 1992), pp.63-70 ; Vladimír Kusin, "The Confederal Search", *Report on Eastern Europe*, vol.2, n°27, July 5, 1995, pp.35-47 ; Lukic and Lynch, *Europe.*

A third section subsequently turns to an analysis of a phenomenon which has been described as "chauvino-communism", i.e the fact that, in the former Soviet bloc, "many high-placed functionaries discovered that they could salvage some of their political power by a rapid ideological conversion to nationalism"[728].
It will be argued that Vladimír Mečiar could in many respects be defined as a "chauvino-communist" -a manipulative and cunning politician who cloaked himself in the new fashion.

The legacies of communism and their impact on the Czech-Slovak conflict after 1989

The communist regime was quickly dismantled but some of its legacies were to have a lasting impact on the political developments in the renewed Czechoslovak democracy.
This section will therefore specifically consider four types of legacies - economic, political, "semantic" and institutional - which had a negative impact on the resolution of the Czech-Slovak conflict between 1989 and the official division of the state on 31 December 1992.

The economic legacy of communism

Firstly, the economic legacy of communism was one of the important roots of the Czech-Slovak tensions after 1989.
This could at first come as a surprise, since, as seen in chapter 3, it is widely acknowledged that the communist economic policies were rather successful in their declared objective to achieve an equalisation of the level of economic development of Slovakia and the Czech Lands[729]. Under the communist regime, the structure of the Slovak economy fundamentally

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[728]George Schöpflin, "Nationalism and Ethnicity in Europe, East and West", in Kupchan, *Nationalism*, p.64. Alternatively, Wojciech Roszkowski calls this phenomenon "nomenklatura nationalism" (see Wojciech Roszkowski, "Nationalism in East Central Europe: Old Wine in New Bottles ?", in Latawski, *Contemporary Nationalism,* pp.22-23)

[729]See for example Sharon L.Wolchik, "Regional Inequalities in Czechoslovakia", in Daniel N. Nelson (ed.), *Communism and the Politics of Inequalities* (Lexington, Toronto; LexingtonBooks, DC Heath and Company; 1983), pp.249-270.

changed: an overwhelmingly rural region in 1945, Slovakia emerged at the end of communism as a highly-industrialised area. It was still lagging behing the Czech republic in many indicators, but the gap had been by 1989 considerably narrowed.

Nevertheless, the nature itself of the communist-led industrialisation of Slovakia became problematic after 1989. The economic development of Slovakia depended on a few industries, such as the arms industry, which rapidly proved too obsolete to survive the economic transition to capitalism.

This one-sided approach to the modernisation of Slovakia was not however a characteristic feature of the communist era and it should be recalled that a significant proportion of the (relatively rare) industrial development projects pursued in Slovakia during the interwar period[730] were also centered around the defence industry[731]. Similarly, during the short existence of the Nazi-sponsored Slovak state, the armaments industry grew and new military enterprises were established in Dubnica and Považská Bystrica - mostly to further German war aims in the framework of the "treaty for the Organization for Total War" (*Wehrwirtschaftsvertrag*)[732].
Moreover, one could wonder whether it is entirely fair to blame the communist planners for this misconceived policy of regional development, when their intention was still after all to modernize and elevate Slovakia. As Adrian Smith points out, economic inequalities between the Czech lands and Slovakia pre-dated communism and their perpetuation should be

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[730]Slovakia was actually "desindustrialised" during the interwar period. Whereas 20.9 percent of the Slovak population worked in the industrial sector in 1910, the corresponding figure for 1948 was down to 14 percent (figures quoted in Adrian Smith, "Uneven Development and the Restructuring of the Armaments Industry in Slovakia", *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, Volume 19, n°4, 1994, p.409).(see also Zora P.Pryor, "Czechoslovak Economic Development", p.211)

[731]Adrian Smith, *Reconstructing*, p.101.

[732]Yudit Kiss, "Lost Illusions ? Defence Industry Conversion in Czechoslovakia, 1989-92", *Europa-Asia Studies*, vol.45, n°6, 1993, p.1047 ; Jörg K. Hoensch, "The Slovak Republic, 1939-1945", in Mamatey and Luža, *A History*, pp.281-282; A.Smith, *Reconstructing*. There are in fact also strategic reasons for the localisation of an armaments industry in Slovakia. As Smith points out, the Soviets, like the Germans before them , recognised the value of Central Slovakia, - after 1945, "a geopolitically safe region away from the front line of the Cold War and closer to the 'security' of the Soviet border" (pp.103-104)

analysed as part of a broader historical pattern of uneven development between the two regions[733].

Despite these two caveats then, as discussed earlier[734], Slovakia was much more affected by the economic reforms than the Czech lands, and this undoubtedly fueled resentments between Czechs and Slovaks.

The political and social legacies of communism

However, the political legacies of communism were probably even more harmful to the integrity of the Czechoslovak state than its economic legacies.
Communism, based on the monopoly of power of the Communist Party, did not allow (with the partial exception of the Prague Spring) the expression of competing political and social interests.
This had after 1989 several adverse consequences on the attempts to find a viable solution to the Czech-Slovak conflict.

Firstly, as seen in chapter 6, post-communist Czechoslovakia suffered from a dearth of experienced, trained politicians or lawyers, able to address effectively the issue of the constitutional relation between the Czech republic and Slovakia. Policy-making on this crucial issue was inevitably left in the benevolent, but unfortunately amateurish hands of the former dissidents. Havel acknowledged after the division of the state that

> we [the Czech and Slovak post-communist leaders] were all amateurs at governing... Writers, doctors, philosophers, economists were suddenly pressed into service. Forty years of totalitarian rule had left us with no politicians experienced in democracy[735].

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[733] A.Smith, *Reconstructing*, passim

[734] cf Chapter 3

Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, communism had a highly negative moral impact. This was once again repeatedly noted by Havel, perhaps nowhere more eloquently than in his first New Year 's address as Czechoslovak president in January 1990:

> The worst thing is that we live in a contaminated moral environment. We fell morally ill because we became used to saying something different from what we thought. We learned not to believe in anything, to ignore each other, to care only about ourselves. Concepts such as love, friendship, compassion, humility, or forgiveness lost their depth and dimensions, and for many of us they represented only psychological pecularities, or they resembled gone-astray greetings from ancient times, a little ridiculous in the era of computers and spaceships[736].

After the fall of communism, necessary attributes of a genuine democratic polity such as tolerance and the habit of compromise were absent. The Czech and Slovak elites who tried between 1990 and 1992 to renegotiate the constitutional structure of the common state were unwilling to compromise and political divergences were often narrowly perceived in terms of "betrayals" or personal antagonisms. Post-communist politicians proved unable to look for or put forward much-needed innovative and creative solutions to the institutional deadlock.

Thirdly, the bequest of an era where politics was the exclusive preserve of apparatchiks of the Communist Party was the widespread disillusion of the population. Timothy Garton Ash claimed in an essay written *before* the revolution of 1989 that he had never visited "a country where politics, and indeed the whole of public life, is a matter of such supreme indifference"[737].

In the immediate aftermath of the fall of communism, the interest and participation of the population in the political life seemed reborn: 96 percent of the Czechs and 94.41 percent of

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[735]Thomas J.Abercrombie, "Czechoslovakia: The Velvet Divorce", *National Geographic*, September 1993, p.15. See also chapter 6.

[736]Václav Havel, "New Year's Address" January 1990, in *Open Letters*, p.391

[737]Timothy Garton Ash, "Czechoslovakia Under the Ice", in *The Uses of Adversity*, p.63

the Slovaks cast their votes during the first post-communist free parliamentary elections held in June 1990 -more than in the corresponding elections in Poland and Hungary[738].

But this enthusiasm remained short-lived. There was a consistent level of support among the Czechs and Slovaks for the maintenance of a common state[739], but the political apathy of the population made impossible the transformation of this latent feeling into a massive and active display of "Czechoslovak patriotism", which could have had an impact on the constitutional negotiations.

Furthermore, Czechs and Slovaks also inherited from the communist era a fundamentally cynical vision of their political leaders and of the influence they could exert as individuals on the political life of their country. For instance, whereas 58 percent of the Americans and 46 percent of the Swiss thought that they had an influence on their government, only 23 percent of the Czechs and 22 percent of the Slovaks believed they could have a say (see table 2.3). After the experience of communism, Czech and Slovak electors often did not realise that in the second post-communist parliamentary elections of June 1992 their votes would this time matter and the separation came as a shock to those who still thought that, as under the communist regime, "politicians never actually mean what they say".

Ultimately, the most damaging socio-political legacy of communism was probably the lid it put for forty years (with the partial exception of the Prague spring) on Czechoslovak civil society[740]. The embryos of civil society that timidely reemerged in the Czech lands and Slovakia during the second half of the seventies often conducted the majority of their activities in only one of the two republics. Czech and Slovak dissidents were engaged in a *parallel* struggle against the monopoly of power of the communist regime, but remained only occasionally in contact with each other.

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[738]Danica Fink-Hafner, "Political Culture in a Context of Democratic Transition: Slovenia in Comparison with other Post-Socialist Countries", in Plasser and Pribersky, *Political Culture*, pp.74-75.

[739]See chapter 6

[740]Ernest Gellner for example contends in *Conditions of Liberty: Civil Society and its Rivals* (London; Penguin Books; 1996), that Marxism and civil society are inherently incompatible. See also Jeffrey C.Goldfarb, *Civility and Subversion: the Intellectual in Democratic Society* (Cambridge; Cambridge University Press; 1998), p.90.

As discussed in chapter 2, this was not so much the result of a concerted and overt unwillingness to cooperate as a reflection of the fact that the communist regime effectively managed for a long time to prevent the establishment of contacts and the holding of meetings between Czech and Slovak activists[741].

"Socialist" cultural policies in effect enhanced the isolation of Czech and Slovak societies. Despite the official claims that the communist regime had reinforced the cultural exchanges between Czechs and Slovaks[742], it was in practice easier for Czech political ("official") and dissident elites to meet their Soviet, Polish or Hungarian colleagues than their Slovak counterparts - and vice versa.

The Czech intellectual Zdeněk Eis for instance observed in 1968 that whereas the departments of Russian had experienced a considerable development within Czech universities, the study of Slovak language and culture lagged significantly behind. From the Slovak side, Anton Hykisch similarly complained that "Slovak culture must often be exported to Prague or Pardubice with absolutely the same efforts and mechanisms than those used to export it to Kiev, Warsaw or Montreal"[743].

The "semantic" legacy of communism

The third legacy of communism could be called "semantic".

Under the communist regime, language was used merely as an instrument of artificial legitimisation of the political system. Words became imbued with ideological significance and lost in the process their capacity to convey real, credible meanings.

Havel, as early as 1965, talked about the "ritualization of language" and contended that

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741 See chapter 2 ; Václav Havel, *Disturbing the Peace: A Conversation with Karel Hvizdala* (London; Faber; 1990), pp.136-137.

742 Josef Korcak, prime minister of the Czech republic, for instance declared in 1978 that he was "happy" that "Czech theatre plays, books and music meet with an always larger audience among Slovaks and the reverse is equally true" (in *Tvorba* 34, 23/ 09/1978), pp.3,5, quoted in Wehrlé, *Le Divorce*, pp.235-236).

743 Wehrlé, *Le Divorce*, p.235

> From being a means of signifying reality, and of enabling us to come to an understanding of it, language seems to have become an end in itself. In this process, language - and, because it is related to it, thought as well - may appear to have increased (the duty to name things having been superseded by the duty to qualify things ideologically), but in fact language is thus degraded: the imputation to language of functions that are not proper to it made it impossible for language to fulfill the function it was meant to fulfill. And thus, ultimately, language is deprived of its most essential importance... The word - as such- has ceased to be a sign for a category, and has gained a kind of occult power to transform one reality into another[744].

The general confusion of terms brought about by communism did not simply wither away with the communist regime in 1989 and it consistently permeated the debates between Czechs and Slovaks.

The most relevant illustration of this phenomenon is perhaps the controversy surrounding concept of "*authentic federation*"[745] -much used after the "velvet revolution", when a chance to save Czechoslovakia still existed. Czechs and Slovaks agreed that the federalisation officially introduced by the communist regime in January 1969 was not viable under the new political circumstances but their understanding of what an "authentic federation" actually meant was deeply contradictory. Whereas the Czechs tended to stress, in a manner reminiscent of the Prague Spring slogan "no federalisation without democratization", that democracy in itself should be a guarantee against the centralisation of the state, the Slovaks insisted on a "grassroot federation", i.e a federation in which "the basis of sovereignty is the sovereignty of each of the two national republics, to which the sovereignty of the federation is delegated"[746]. There was thus a clear opposition between the Czech insistance on the notions

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[744]Václav Havel, "On Evasive Thinking", in *Open Letters*, p.12 ; *L'Angoisse de La Liberté*, p.11. See also his essay, "A Word About Words" (*Open Letters*, pp.377-389).

[745]Leff, *The Czech*, p.129

[746]Dušan Nikodym, "Bez suverenity niet národa", *Verejnost* (2 June 1990) and "Šanca pre Slovensko", *Verejnost* (29 May 1990), quoted in Leff, "Czech and Slovak nationalism", p.146.

of individual civil rights and majority rule and Slovak advocacy of collective rights and of a "federation re-negotiated 'from below'"[747].

This debate about the meaning of "federation" was an indirect consequence of the communist period because "the most noble juridical terms in the West have been distorted by the propaganda and the wooden language and, for the most part, ended up signifying the contrary of their real meaning"[748]. The concept of "federation" was discredited, not because it was in itself unacceptable or inadequate in the Czechoslovak context, but above all because the Czechoslovak federation had been primarily "communist".

The institutional legacies of communism: the flaws of Soviet-style federalism

This leads us to examine more specifically the institutional legacies of communism, i.e the fact that the Czechoslovak federation was largely a "fake" or a "paper" federation.

On the one hand, the federalisation had undeniably some genuine and positive federative elements. It answered the long-standing wish of the Slovaks to be the "equals" of the Czechs and enhanced their constitutional and political position within the state. The prohibition of the majority rule and the recognition of the principle of parity in the legislative organs[749] could ensure that the Slovaks had a say in the policies of the federal centre.
The communist federation was even arguably too "efficient", since the prohibition of majority-rule gave a disproportionate representation to the Slovaks. After 1989, it allowed the

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[747]Batt, "Czechoslovakia" in Whitefield, *The new institutional architecture*, p.52

[748]Michel, *Nations et nationalismes, p.*210

[749]"The principle of parity was honored in the composition of federal committees, the constitutional courts, and, to a lesser extent, in the structure and procedures of the National Assembly. Parity was not, however, the basis for ministerial and government appointments. Within these agencies, despite measures to ensure Slovak representation, simple majority rule prevailed" (Leff, *National Conflict*, p.127). See also Wehrlé, *Le divorce*, p.69.

new-democratically elected Slovak representatives to dispose of a *de facto* veto power on the federal authorities and block the attempts to find a constitutional solution to the Czech-Slovak conflict.

On the other hand however, the appearance of a working federation hid between January 1969 and December 1989, the predominance of the Communist party, its leading role as a "vanguard", as well as the strict application of the concept of "democratic centralism" - once rather bluntly defined by a Soviet theoretician as:

> the main principle on the basis of which the life of our society, its economy, social sphere, state and party systems are formed. *The basis of this principle is centralism, the addition "democratic" being used only to soften it a little.* The essence of this principle is the priority of the centre in relation to all the other levels, which permeates the entire theory, politics and practice[750].

The Czechoslovak socialist federation was "federal in form", but "centralist in substance"[751], and one of its major flaws was the non-federalisation of the Czechoslovak Communist Party. There was initially some talks of establishment of a permanent Czech Party Bureau[752], on the model of the Slovak Communist Party, but during the plenum of the Central Committee of the Czechoslovak Communist Party in May 1969 -hardly five months after the official federalisation of the country - Gustáv Husák put a definitive end to this project, when he unambiguously declared:

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[750]A.Yemelyanov as quoted by Miervaldis Ramans, "Socialist federalism: Federalism and Democratic Centralism" in Alastair McAuley (ed.), *Soviet Federalism, Nationalism and Economic Decentralisation* (Leicester; Leicester University Press; 1991), pp.128-129 (emphasis added).

[751]Kirschbaum, *A History of Slovakia*, p.245.

[752]K.Williams, *The Prague Spring*, p.156.

> [t]he party is not federalized; on the contrary, it is unified, and we [the Czechoslovak Communist Party] are responsible for the work of communists at all levels, federal as well as national[753].

This continuing asymmetry of the party institutions limited the impact of a federalisation process already restricted by the constitutional amendments adopted in 1970 and 1971 in the context of the post-Dubček "normalization". The Czechs came to feel that they were discriminated against and that the dual federation gave an unduly influence to the Slovaks, who constituted only one third of the population of the country[754]. To an extent, as Lloyd Cutler and Herman Schwartz pointed out, it seems indeed hard to find anywhere in the world a federative structure which gave so much political leverage to a minority[755].

Yet even the Slovaks, a priori the main beneficiaries of the federalisation, grew increasingly dissatisfied with its actual working. The state was officially a federation of two equal nations but they still perceived the influence of the Czechs as dominant and experienced a strong feeling of relative deprivation.

For all these reasons, the federalisation discontented the two nations and had the unintended consequence that "the Czechs now felt that they were being governed by the Slovaks, while the Slovaks thought that it was once again 'Prague' that was depriving them of genuine home rule"[756].

Czechoslovakia suffered from the ills characteristic of Soviet-style federalism. In the context of the country's enrolment in the Soviet bloc,

> there was no inherent ideological difficulty in legitimizing federation in accordance with Leninist principles and Soviet practice. The only roadblock to federation had been government insistence that the national question was already solved; once this

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[753] *Rudé Právo*, 2 June 1969, quoted in R.Dean, *Nationalism and Political Change*, p.41.

[754] To be more precise, less than that, since the Slovak republic is far from being ethnically homogeneous and is also inhabited by several minorities, the most important of them being the Hungarians (more than 10 percent of the population of the republic)

[755] Cutler and Schwartz, "Constitutional Reform", p.549

[756] Vladimír Kusin, quoted in *ibid.*, p.520

position was abandoned, the 'Leninist principles and the experience of the Soviet multinational state' were an irresistible precedent[757].

The Czechoslovak constitution -in contrast to the 1977 Soviet constitution (article 72)[758]- did not grant its constituent republics the right to secede[759] but it still followed Soviet practice and specifically included two provisions that reinforced the Czech-Slovak cleavage.

Firstly, as noted earlier, because the federalisation of the state was not accompanied by a corresponding federalisation of the Czechoslovak communist party and the creation of a branch in the Czech lands next to the Slovak party, the organisation of the Czechoslovak party duplicated the asymmetrical structure of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, where each of the constituent republics of the USSR -*except* Russia- had its own Communist party[760].

In September 1968, when after the crushing of the Prague Spring, the Czechoslovak leadership (then still led by Dubček) argued with the Soviet Politburo that the creation of a Communist Party of the Czech Lands was a necessary step towards federalisation, Leonid Brezhnev opposed the move, not only because it would have constituted an "inexplicable departure" from the Soviet model, but also because it could potentially lead to "unhealthy feelings of a nationalist character"[761].

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[757]Leff, *National Conflict*, p.124 ; for example, the Slovak historian Milos Gosiorovsky drew a plan for the creation of a federation in Czechoslovakia, emphasizing the fact that the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia were both federal states and arguing that "the Slovak nation was the only Slavic nation in the socialist camp that did not have national organs of socialist state power" (Miloš Gosiorovský, *Historický casopis*, XVI, 1968, n°3, 354, quoted in Stanislav J. Kirschbaum, "Federalism in Slovak Communist Politics", *Canadian Slavonic Papers / Revue Canadienne des Slavistes*, n°4, 19, 1977, p.459)

[758]The article 72 of the 1977 Soviet constitution thus states that "Each Union Republic shall retain the right freely to secede from the USSR" (see for instance Jane Henderson, "Legal Aspects of the Soviet Federal Structure", in McAuley, *Soviet Federalism*, p.36)

[759]Leff notes that it was felt that the right of secession would be inapplicable in a binational, as opposed to a multinational state (*National Conflict*, p.124). In any case, it seems fair to acknowledge that the right to secede granted to the Soviet union republics was purely formal (see for instance Michael Bruchis, *"The National Policy of the CPSU and its Reflection in Soviet socio-political terminology"*, IIIrd World Congress for Soviet and East European Studies, Washington, 1985, pp.6-7)

[760]It seems however interesting to note that in the third communist ethnofederation, Yugoslavia, the "dominant" Serb republic had its own communist party (called League of Communists).

[761]This episode is related in K.Williams, *The Prague Spring*, p.159

Brezhnev's justification appears in retrospect ironical, since the non-federalisation of the Czechoslovak party unwittingly reestablished the preexisting divide between the dominant Czech nation (who did not "need" an autonomous party) and the "inferior" Slovak part of the state (whose subordinate status was implicitly acknowledged by the "gift" of an "independent" Slovak Communist party). Slovaks came to perceive the Czechoslovak Communist party as in essence a "Czech" communist party[762], committed to the defense of Czech interests, while Czechs were precisely able to deplore the absence of a party organ specifically devoted to these same "Czech" interests[763].

Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, Czechoslovak federalism was based, once again in accordance with Soviet practice, on ethnoterritorial units. From 1969 to 1992, Czechoslovakia was a bipartite ethnofederation, where federal (republican) boundaries were congruent with national (Czech and Slovak) boundaries . Like in the Soviet Union, the national principle was put at the centre of the Czechoslovak federal structure[764].

This is important because, as demonstrated by Robert Kaiser in the context of the USSR[765], it institutionalised and consolidated the dominance of Czechs and Slovaks in their respective republics: the Czech socialist republic (*Česká Socialistická Republika*) and the Slovak socialist republic (*Slovenská Socialistická Republika*) became the geographical "homelands" and the "virtual nation-states" of the two nations.

This "national territoriality" became politically relevant after the velvet revolution, when democratisation allowed it to become a determining factor in Czech and Slovak political life. For post-communist politicians, "national territoriality" had the explosive potential to become "a politically mobilizing strategy to gain greater sovereignty for the nation in its perceived

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[762]Leff, *National Conflict*, p.123

[763]For example, some anonymous authors writing in the review *Listy* stated that the independent existence of the Slovak Communist Party established "a new, inverted asymmetry" - in which Slovaks had their own secure base while retaining the capacity, acting through the federal party apparat, to "meddle in Czech affairs". (see Leff, *ibid.*, p.246)

[764]See Richard Pipes, *The Formation of the Soviet Union: Communism and Nationalism, 1917-1923* (Cambridge, Mass.; Harvard University Press; 1954), p.112.

[765]See Robert Kaiser, *The Geography of Nationalism in Russia and the USSR* (Princeton; Princeton University Press; 1994).

homeland"[766] -a sure route to electoral success. This explains why Mečiar and Klaus, the winners of the June 1992 elections, built their power base in their respective republics and consistently strove during their electoral campaigns to appeal to their "national/republican" constituencies.

In many ways, what is striking is the extent to which the failed constitutional negotiations of 1990-1992 followed the pattern of the negotiations of 1968

In his seminal *Czechoslovakia's Interrupted Revolution*, H. Gordon Skilling emphasised the differences between the constitutional projects defended by Czech and Slovak politicians and jurists in 1968.
The Communist Party's Action Programme of April rejected the existing asymmetrical arrangement and stated:

> It is essential to recognize the advantages of a socialist federation which allows two equal nations to live together in a common socialist state...It is therefore necessary to draw up and pass a constitutional law to this effect...thereby solving the status of Slovak national bodies in our constitutional system in the nearest future...[767]

Yet, the interpretations of what this should mean in practice were highly contradictory.
The two leading advocates of federalism in the Czech lands, Jiří Grospič and Zdenek Jičínský, stressed the necessity of strong federal institutions with "full functions", whereas the Slovak constitutional experts Karol Laco and Vojtech Hatala 'argued that the "center of gravity" should rest in national organs and that federal powers should exist "only where unavoidable for the functioning of the whole federal organization"'[768].
In essence, this national divide was reproduced in 1992 by the opposition between Klaus's view of a centralised, "working" federation and Mečiar's concept of a loose confederation

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[766] *ibid.*, p.28

[767] The 1968 Action Programme, quoted in Steiner, *The Slovak dilemma*, p.172.

[768] H.Gordon Skilling, *Czechoslovakia's Interrupted Revolution*, (Princeton; Princeton University Press; 1976), p.464.

whose sovereignty would originate from the two constituting republics linked by a state treaty.

The same cleavages could be found in the economic standpoints defended by the constitutional projects in 1968 and in 1990-1992, with the continuing debate between the (mostly Czech) advocates of an integrated federation and a single all-state economy and the (mostly Slovak) advocates of a looser structure which would for instance have allowed Slovakia to establish its own central bank or its own currency[769].

It is interesting to note in this context that this continuity of issues was also to a not negligible extent paralleled by the continuity of what could be called the "legal" elites.
For example, Jičínský, who had been one of the drafters of the 1960 constitution and a major participant to the 1968 federalisation debate, reemerged in 1989 as a member of Civic Forum and an advocate of a constitutional reform along less centralist lines, taking into account the Slovaks' legitimate concerns.
Jičínský, a supporter of the common state, had warned Havel about the possible reactions of some Slovaks to his suggestion to simply drop the adjective socialist from the name of the country in March 1990[770] (he is accused by Miroslav Macek of being responsible for the "hyphen war"[771]) and argued that the separation could not and should not have occurred without a referendum[772].

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[769] *Ibid.*, p. 467-469. See chapter 3 for the economic debates of 1990-1992.

[770] John Keane, *Václav Havel*, p.418-420; Stein, *Czecho/Slovakia*, p.57

[771] Miroslav Macek, "Fragments from the Dividing of Czechoslovakia", in Michael Kraus and Allison Stanger (eds), *Irreconcilable differences ?: Explaining Czechoslovakia's Dissolution* (Lanham, Boulder; Rowman and Littlefield Publishers; 2000), p.241.

[772] See for instance Zdenek Jičínský and Vladimír Mikule, "Einleitung zu den Verfassungstexten", in Karin Schmid and Vladimír Horský (eds), *Das Ende der Tschechoslowakei 1992 in verfassungsrechtlicher Sicht* (Berlin, Berlin Verlag; 1995); Stein, *Czecho/Slovakia*, p.230

The dangerous liaisons between communism and nationalism
Why nationalism was bound to become the "supreme stage of communism"

After having seen in the first section how the legacies of forty years of communism (and especially the institutional consequences of the Soviet-style federalism) contributed to the break-up of the state in 1992, it seems now necessary to examine the ambiguous links between communism and nationalism in the Czechoslovak context.
The previous chapter has contended that nationalism played a major role in the events of 1989-1992 but the reemergence of Czech and Slovak nationalisms after the velvet revolution could be said to be the ineluctable result of the "nationality policies" of the communist regime, which adhered to the ideological framework of Marxism Leninism -and not only as far as its understanding of federalism (described in the previous section) was concerned.

Marxism and its Leninist "variant" considered nationalism a "bourgeois and petit bourgeois ideology and policy"[773] doomed to disappear in a communist society. The emergence of nationalism was seen as the consequence of economic inequalities and the result of the insidious (*listig*, cunning) manipulation of the proletariat by the bourgeoisie - since, according to Marx, in truth,

> [t]he nationality of the worker is neither French, nor English, nor German, it is *labour, free slavery, self-huckstering*. His government is neither French, nor English, nor German, it is *capital*. His native air is neither French, nor German, nor English, it is *factory air*. The land belonging to him is neither French, nor English, nor German, it lies a few feet *below the ground*[774].

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[773]according to the definition of *The Great Soviet Encyclopedia*, quoted by W.Connor, *The National Question*, p.XIII

[774]Karl Marx, "Draft of an Article on Friedrich List's Book Das nationale System der politischen Ökonomie", *Collected Works*, volume 4, p.280, as quoted by Roman Szporluk, *Communism and Nationalism: Karl Marx versus Friedrich List* (New York, Oxford; Oxford University Press; 1988), p.35

In theory therefore, Marxism-Leninism and nationalism appeared incompatible and Marx and Engels made clear in the opening sentence of the Communist Manifesto that "the history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles"[775] - *not* the history of "national" struggles[776]. The official cornerstone of Marxism-Leninism was consequently "proletarian internationalism", not nationalism.

Despite their seemingly contradictory starting points, the ideological similarities between communism and nationalism have however recently been the subject of an important and growing literature[777]. As George Schöpflin states,

> [A]t the level of theory, communism and nationalism are incompatible. Communism insists that an individual's fundamental identity is derived from class positions; nationalism, that it derives from culture. In practice, however, the relationship between the two doctrines, both of which were partial responses to the challenge of modernity, was much more ambiguous[778].

From a general point of view, communism and nationalism are all-encompassing - "totalitarian"- world views with what Peter Zwick defined as "quasi-religious" features[779].

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[775]Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, p.3 (Oxford; Oxford University Press, 1992)

[776]See for example Ernest Gellner, *Encounters with Nationalism* (Oxford; Blackwell; 1994), p.6

[777]See for example: Zbigniew Brzezinski, "Post-Communist Nationalism", *Foreign Affairs*, vol.68, n°5, Winter 1989/1990, p.2 ; Jacques Rupnik, *L'Autre Europe*, pp.411-412 ; George Schöpflin, "The Problem of Nationalism in the Postcommunist Order", in Peter V.E Volten (ed.), *Bound to Change: Consolidating Democracy in East Central Europe* (New York, Prague; Institute for East-West Studies; Westview Press; 1992), pp.31-33 ; Peter F.Sugar, "Nationalism, the Victorious Ideology", in Peter F. Sugar (ed.), *Eastern European Nationalism in the Twentieth Century*, p.427; Roman Szporluk, *Communism and Nationalism*; Maria N.Todorova, "Ethnicity, Nationalism, and the communist legacy in Eastern Europe", in Millar and Wolchik, *The Social Legacy*, pp.89-107; Walter Kemp, *Nationalism and Communism in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union: a basic contradiction ?* (Basingstoke, London; Macmillan Press; 1999)

[778]Schöpflin, "The Problem of Nationalism", p.31

[779]See Peter Zwick, *National Communism* (Boulder; Westview Press; 1983), p.11

Communism and nationalism are largely messianistic ideological outlooks, answers and reactions to the idea of "Progress"[780].
Furthermore, they are both "collectivist" approaches to the world, with the somewhat logical result that the vacuum left by the collapse of "collectivist" communism was likely to be filled by another "collectivist" ideology , nationalism[781].

The Czechoslovak communist regime, like all the other communist parties of the Soviet bloc, purported to eliminate the expression of "national" feelings among Czechs and Slovaks.
The Party, especially under the leadership of the Czechs Gottwald and Novotný, espoused the main tenants of Marxist-Leninist (Soviet) nationality policy and above all the notion of *zblíženie*[782] (i.e the idea that the equalisation of the level of economic development of the Czech lands and Slovakia would ultimately lead to "the bringing together and then fusion" of the two nations)[783]. It was assumed that

> [t]he national question [would lose] its dimension and political significance and [would be] resolved to some degree automatically by an economic and cultural evolution ; that is, in concrete Czechoslovak conditions, by the industrialization of Slovakia and the equalisation of its level with that of Bohemia-Moravia[784].

The elimination of the developmental differential between the Czech lands and Slovakia (the economic and social "flourishing" of Slovakia) would de facto suppress nationalism, and paradoxically ("dialectically") lead to the "merging" of the Czech and Slovak nations into a

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[780]See for example: Gellner, *Encounters*, pp.1-2; Zwick, *ibid.*, p.12

[781]On the common points between communism and nationalism, see also Montserrat Guibernau, *Nationalisms: The Nation-State and Nationalism in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge; Polity Press; 1996), pp.19-22 ; Anthony D. Smith, *Nationalism in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford; Martin Robertson; 1979), p.143.

[782]The original Russian concept of *sliyaniye* was translated in Slovak as *zblíženie*, in Czech as *sblížovani*, and in Serbo-Croatian as *zblizavanje*.

[783]Wehrlé, *Le Divorce*, p.182 ; see also Leff, *National Conflict*, p.143.

[784]Zdenek Jicinský, "25 let socialistického vývoje státopravních vztahu ceského a slovenského národa", *Právník*, CIX (1970), n°5, 375, quoted in Stanislav J. Kirschbaum, "Federalism in Slovak Communist Politics", *Canadian Slavonic Papers*, 19, n°4, 1977, p.455.

new "socialist" construct -a "Czechoslovak" people (*československý národ*) or at least a homogenous "national political society"[785].

However, the aftermath of the velvet revolution and the resurgence of Slovak and Czech nationalisms described in the previous chapter demonstrated the failure of communism to live up to these "ideals": the communist regime succeeded in furthering the "flourishing" of the Slovak nation but fell conpiscuously short in its attempt to foster any form of *zblíženie* between Czechs and Slovaks.
The inherent contradiction in the Marxist-Leninist dialectical solution (one could almost say "recipe") to the nationality question eventually proved impossible to overcome and this, despite Stalin's early confident claim that it was precisely the "contradictory" character of the communist approach that would enable it to "capture the most impregnable fortress in the sphere of the national question"[786].

There are several potential explanations for the failure of Marxist-Leninist nationality policies in Czechoslovakia and the subsequent resurgence of Czech and Slovak nationalisms after 1989.

As discussed earlier, the territorialisation of Czech and Slovak national identities, their consolidation and "crystallisation" within a specific federal "homeland" led to the reaffirmation of Czech and Slovak nationalisms.

It was however also the consequence of a more general and profound "ideological" ambiguity.

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[785]Leff, *National Conflict*, p.145; W.Connor quotes an article written by a Yugoslav journalist in 1976 which remarks that references to the creation of a single "socialist" nation are increasingly present in Czechoslovak publications and further states that "[t]he Soviet experience... points to a path of 'bringing closer together, of overcoming differences, of merging, of removing the specific traits of nations'and, finally, of creating a 'socialist nation'. If in a multinational state, such as the USSR, 'a single-Soviet Nation had been formed', why should not a 'single nation' be created in the countries of the 'socialist community'?" (*The National Question*, p.447)

[786]Joseph Stalin, "Deviations on the National Question: Extract from a Report Delivered at the Sixteenth Congress of the C.P.S.U, June 27, 1930", in Joseph Stalin, *Marxism and the National-Colonial Question: A Collection of Articles and Speeches* (San Francisco; Proletarian Publishers; 1975), p.394.

The internationalism promoted by the regime was opposed to the idea of "bourgeois nationalism", "an excessive consciousness of belonging to a given ethnic group and an undue emphasis on local government"[787]. Hence, it is for the alleged crime of "bourgeois nationalism" that the Slovak communist leaders Vlado (Vladimír) Clementis, Ladislav Novomeský or Gustáv Husák were jailed or even executed (in the case of Clementis) at the beginning of the fifties. This attitude towards the expression of a national-oriented approach persisted until at least 1968 and as late as in October 1967, during the plenum of the Central Commitee, Novotný could still publicly accuse Alexander Dubček, then head of the Slovak party, of being the spokesman of "narrow national interests" and a "bourgeois nationalist"[788].

Yet, this nationality (or perhaps more appropriately dubbed "anti"-nationality) policy of the Communist Party did not alleviate the deep national divisions between Czechs and Slovaks. On the contrary, it "pushed under the carpet"[789] what was clearly a genuine issue, by failing to address it or even to tolerate any serious and non-dogmatic discussion about it.
Under communism, the Czechs and Slovaks could not settle their historical disputes, and, as soon as the communist regime collapsed, the long suppressed national sentiments of the Czechs and Slovaks loudly reasserted themselves.

This is especially significant as far as the development of post-communist Slovak politics is concerned.
The communist, Marxist-dominated historiography presented a rather degrading picture of Slovak historical heroes or myths. Two of the most eloquent examples of this are the negative assessment of the attitude of Slovak awakeners, such as Ľudovít Štúr, during the springtime

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[787]Edward Táborský, *Communism in Czechoslovakia 1948-1960* (Princeton; Princeton University Press; 1961), p.131, quoted in William Shawcross, *Dubček* (London; Weidenfield & Nicolson; 1970), p.56.

[788]See for example the insider view of Dubček in *Hope Dies Last,* pp.115-116; See also H. Gordon Skilling, *Czechoslovakia's Interrupted Revolution*, p.167 ; E.Steiner, *The Slovak Dilemma*, p.112; Shawcross, *Dubček*, p.131.

[789]The expression is used by Schöpflin, "The Problem of Nationalism", p.33

of the nations of 1848 and the distorted interpretation of the National Uprising of August 1944[790].

Marx and Engels had qualified as "reactionary" the support that Štúr and other Slovak leaders had given to the Habsburg monarchy against the Hungarian revolution in 1848[791] and this seemed enough to condemn Slovak nationalism as intrinsically opposed to communist ideals[792].

Similarly, according to the official historigraphy, another decisive event in Slovak historical development, the Slovak National Uprising was the result of the activities of Moscow, and especially of the communist partisans parachuted from the Soviet Union[793]. The negation of the role played by the Slovak-based communist and non-communist resistance (emphasised by the arrest of those Slovak communist leaders who had taken an active part in the Uprising such as Husák and Novomeský) humiliated a large part of the population.

The "Slovak spring" which started in 1962-1963 with Dubček's election at the head of the Communist party of Slovakia[794] and the release and rehabilitation of the "bourgeois

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[790]See for example Dean, *Nationalism and Political Change,* p.8; Stanley Riveles, "Slovakia: Catalyst of Crisis", *Problems of Communism*, May-June 1968, vol. XVII, pp.4-5

[791]See for instance Shawcross, *Dubček*, p.121

[792]The three texts which illustrate more clearly the contempt of Marx and Engels for the Slovaks and the Czechs are Engels's "Der Magyarische Kampf" (The Magyar Struggle), "Der demokratische Panslawismus"(Democratic Panslavism) and "Revolution and Counter-revolution in Germany" (the first two articles published in "Neue Rheinische Zeitung" in 1849, pp.165-176 and 270-286 in Karl Marx und Friedrich Engels, *Werke*, Band 6, Berlin; Dietz Verlag; 1970 -the last published in the New York Daily Tribune in 1852, p.46, in Karl Marx / Friedrich Engels, *Collected Works*, volume 11, London, Lawrence and Wishart, 1979)

[793]Riveles, "Slovakia", p.4

[794]For an assessment of the role of Slovakia in the destalinization process, see for example: Gordon Skilling, *Czechoslovakia's Interrupted Revolution*; J.M Kirschbaum, "Slovakia in the de-Stalinization and Federalization Process of Czechoslovakia", *Canadian Slavonic Papers*, X, 4, 1968, pp. 522-556; Vladimír V. Kusin, *Political Grouping on the Czechoslovak Reform Movement* (London and Basingstoke; Macmillan Press; 1972), pp.143-161 ; Riveles, "Slovakia", pp.1-9.

nationalists" jailed in the fifties[795], therefore led to a fundamental reappraisal of Slovak history[796].

The attacks on the official historiography predictably first came from the former released "bourgeois nationalists" such as Husák, who published in 1964 his *Testimony to the Slovak National Uprising* but, more surprisingly, the movement was soon joined by high-ranked communist officials such as Dubček, who in 1965, during the celebrations for the 150th anniversary of Štúr's birth, called the previously reviled Štúr "the greatest son of the Slovak people". In an obvious contrast to the usual Marxist assessment of Štúr as a reactionary counter-revolutionary, Dubček endeavoured to justify Štúr's actions:

> Štúr lived in a period when feudalism was dying, in which the power of the bourgeoisie began to gain ascendancy. It was the period when the revolution began. The ideas and actions of Štúr can be understood only in the context of the deep revolutionary movement thrusting through all European countries. The development of his ideas was very complex. He was inspired by love of his country. His feelings and emotions were in harmony with his reason. With the unity of the people, his personality grew in stature. He worked for his people's language, for their own laws, for education. He showed up the brutality of feudalism which was such a great barrier to the evolution of society. He demonstrated the great gap between lords and serfs. He understood the principal social and economic problems and the tendencies of his period, and he understood that everything must change[797].

However, despite these significant changes of attitude, the process of relegitimation of the expression of Slovak "national" feelings still remained, even up to 1989, to a large extent constrained by what was considered "acceptable" by the communist authorities.

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[795]The "fiction of so-called bourgeois nationalism" was officially abandoned and repudiated by the Czechoslovak Communist party at the December 1963 Central Committee meeting. See Leff, *National Conflict*, p.109

[796]E.Steiner, *The Slovak Dilemma*, pp.122-128.

[797]*Pravda* (Bratislava), 31 October 1965, quoted in Shawcross, *Dubček*, pp.122-123 (anecdotically, Dubček was born in the same cottage of the Slovak village of Uhrovec as Štúr)

For many "Czechoslovak" communists, the Slovaks (notwithstanding their quiescence during the "normalisation" era and the high profile of leaders such as Husák or Biľak) were perceived as less "progressive" than the Czechs who were still the "vanguard" of the Party, "the vanguard of the vanguard".

Slovak history could become again the subject of objective studies only after 1989 and, unfortunately, at that point, the Slovaks in search of a new and more "glorious" identity leant towards a nationalist conception of their past. This process amounted to a genuine "cognitive liberation"[798], with an audience "tired of Communist propaganda" and understandably "hungry for information"[799].

"National communism" in Czechoslovakia

However, what was probably most harmful to the maintenance of a common state between the Czechs and Slovaks was not the misguided nature and ultimate failure of communist nationality policies but the opportunistic use of nationalism that often characterised, in blatant contradiction to its internationalist rhetoric, the policies of the Czechoslovak communist party.

The Czechoslovak communist regime, like in the other countries of the Soviet bloc, used "national communism" (the merging of socialist and national themes) to consolidate its monopoly of power.

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[798]Gail Lapidus, "From Democratization to Disintegration: the Impact of Perestroïka on the National Question", in Gail W.Lapidus, Victor Zavlavsky with Philip Goldman (eds.), *From Union to Commonwealth: Natioalism and Separatism in the Soviet Republics* (Cambridge, New York; Cambridge University Press; 1992), p.48.

[799]Jelinek, "A Whitewash in Colour", p.120

Czechoslovakia never had charismatic and outspoken proponents of "national communism" such as Tito, Ceauşescu or even Gomulka. Neither Gottwald nor Novotný had the required independence of mind vis-à-vis Moscow, Dubček always remained an "internationalist" at heart[800] and Husák, a potential (Slovak) "national communist" forfeited its "nationalist" tendencies when he was chosen as general secretary of the Czechoslovak Communist Party in 1969.

Yet Czechoslovak communists exploited nationalist feelings and, in a bi-national state like Czechoslovakia, a policy of "divide-to-rule" was an attractive, political option.
The federalization of 1968 was the only reform that survived the crushing of the Prague Spring because it was a sure and effective way to gain some much-needed measure of "support" (if only passive) for the normalisation process among the Slovak population[801] - even if this strategy prevented the establishment of a constructive dialogue between Czech and Slovak elites.

Most significantly, the Party set a risky and unfortunate precedent for what happened after 1989: regardless of the official rhetoric, there was an intrinsic link between nationalism and communism and "national communism" became a normal feature of communism "in practice"[802].

The next section therefore turns to the examination of a phenomenon which is in many ways typically "post"-communist and most vividly illustrates the dangerous liaisons between communism and nationalism, "chauvino-communism".

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[800] See Shawcross, *Dubček*, passim

[801] Elster, "Transition, Constitution-making and Separation in Czechoslovakia", p.109

[802] See for example W.Connor, *The National Question*; Szporluck, *Communism*; Zwick, *National*.

A typically post-communist phenomenon: "chauvino-communism" and its role in the break-up of Czechoslovakia

"Chauvino-communism", as previously defined, refers to the fact that many former supporters of the communist regime endorsed nationalism as a means to retain or gain power, and the most successful "chauvino-communist" is widely acknowledged to be the Serb leader Slobodan Milosevic[803] but "chauvino-communism" also had an impact in Czechoslovakia. The Communist party of Bohemia-Moravia[804] took a nationalist stance in its opposition to the restitutions of the property of the Sudeten Germans expelled from the country after the second World War[805] but "chauvino-communism" was essentially a Slovak occurrence, exemplified by the most influential Slovak politician, Vladimír Mečiar[806].

A portrait of Mečiar as a "chauvino-communist"

Mečiar, a former leader of the Slovak Socialist Youth Union between 1963 and 1969, who studied in Moscow at the Leninists' Komsomol College[807] was dismissed from his responsibilities after the end of the Prague Spring because of "reformist" tendencies. However, he never became involved in the activities of dissident networks and, as a firm

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[803]See for example Christopher Bennett, *Yugoslavia's Bloody Collapse: Causes, Course and Consequences* (London; Hurst; 1995); Laura Silber and Allan Little, *The Death of Yugoslavia* (London; Penguin Books; revised edition, 1996; 1995), pp.37-47.

[804]Jiří Pehe, "Divisions in the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia", *Report on Eastern Europe*, July 26, 1991, vol.2, n°30, pp.10-13.

[805]Schöpflin, "Nationalism and Ethnicity", p.64. See also Jeffrey S. Kopstein, "The Politics of National Reconciliation : Memory and Institutions in German-Czech Relations since 1989", *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, vol.3, n°2, Summer 1997, p.71.

[806]For a portrayal of Mečiar as a "chauvino-communist", see for example Attila Ágh, *The Politics of Central Europe* (London; SAGE Publications; 1998), p.72; Elster, Offe, and Preuss, *Institutional Design*, p.16 ; Hermet, *Histoire des Nations*, p.222.

[807]Jan Obrman, "Slovak Politician Accused of Secret Police Ties", *RFE / RL Research Report*, vol.1, n°15, 10 April 1992, p.15

lawyer between 1973 and 1990, was clearly part of the "grey zone" between active collaboration and passive support for the regime.

In fact, the sole accounts of his political activities under the communist regime is clearly not enough to describe Mečiar as a "chauvino-communist". After all, he did not hold any high-ranking job in the communist hierarchy under normalisation and the huge majority of the Czech and Slovak leaders after 1989 had in any case been at some point in their life members, often with important responsibilities, of the Communist party[808].

Mečiar can nevertheless be qualified as a "chauvino-communist" because he based his electoral successes on a "red-brown coalition". He managed to rally around his name a broad constituency: his demagogic, nationalist-populist rhetoric appealed not only to the average Slovak eager to elect a politician perceived as able to stand up to the Czechs, but also often provided the former red nomenklatura in Slovakia with a convenient channel of reconversion. One part of the former Slovak communist elite was successfully able to replace the old socialist-internationalist slogans by nationalist catchwords, thus retaining some form of political, but more often economic, influence.

At an economic level, the opposition of Mečiar's Movement for a Democratic Slovakia to the radical, neo-liberal economic reforms advocated by Klaus found an audience among the former communist Slovak industrials. As Martin Bútora and Zora Bútorová explained,

> the Slovak industry had been based on a heavy industry (mining, smelting, etc.) calling for intensive work and a lot of energy and having often devastating repercussions on the environment, as well as on a rather intrusive military industry. Since the industrial lobby was isolated from the world-wide tendencies, it was not surprising for it to feel threatened by the monetarist policy, inspired by the theories of Friedman - policy which came from Prague. The proportion of those which have been called "pure socialists"... was higher in Slovakia than in the Czech Republic. The

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[808] Václav Havel, who never adhered to the Party, appears to be in this respect the exception that confirms the rule. In the Czech republic, a considerable proportion of the prominent politicians of the immediate post-communist era, such as Marian Čalfa, Vladimír Dlouhý, Karel Dyba, Jiří Dientsbier, Pavel Rychetský, Miroslav Vacek or Luboš Dobrovský, were indeed former members of the party. An identical situation prevailed in Slovakia, where not only Mečiar but also the two politicians who would turn out to become his fiercest opponents, Michal Kovác and Jozef Moravcik, were all former members of the Party (see Thomas A. Baylis, "Elite Change After Communism: Eastern Germany, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia, *East European Politics and Societies*, volume 12, n°2, Spring 1998, pp.278-279)

former was therefore less ready to undergo the radical reform which got under way in the federation. That is the reason why the high-ranking industrial managers regarded the HZDS [MDS], and Mečiar in particular, as the movement and the man which were defending their interests[809].

The process of privatisation in Slovakia has been characterised by the massive participation of the former communist elites, which were able to use their experience and contacts to prosper under the new capitalist system. This emergence of "red capitalists" is not a purely Slovak phenomenon and could be observed in virtually all the countries of the former Soviet bloc, including in the Czech lands (even if on an arguably smaller scale)[810], but the Slovak "red capitalists" seemed to have been at least implicitly encouraged by the rather complacent and favourable attitude of Mečiar towards them. During his second tenure as Slovak prime minister from June 1992 to April 1994, Mečiar headed the National Property Fund (*Fond Národného majetku*-FNM), in charge of the privatisation of Slovak industries[811] -thus exercising a considerable amount of control on the attribution process and putting himself in the convenient position of being able to "reward" his political followers[812].
At a political level, the opposition of the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia to the lustration law could similarly be considered as an evidence of this alliance of interests between Mečiar and the former communist elite. Former communists which gave their allegiance to Mečiar's nationalism were able to retain some of their power - even more so once Slovakia gained its independence. Significantly, 18 out of the 19 members of the

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[809]Bútora and Bútorová, "Identités", p.119

[810]See for example Roman Frydman, Kenneth Murphy and Andrzej Rapaczynski, *Capitalism with a Comrade's Face : Studies in the Postcommunist Transition* (Budapest; Central European University Press; 1998), pp.42-54 and the comparative study of the adaptation of the Polish and Czech nomenklaturas to the post-communist economic transformation by Georges Mink and Jean-Charles Szurek, "Agir ou subir: les nomenklaturas polonaise et tchèque face à la grande mutation économique (1988-1993)", *Revue d'Etudes comparatives Est-Ouest*, n°4, December 1994, pp.47-63

[811]Frydman, Murphy and Rapaczynski, *Capitalism*, p.18; Adrian Smith, "Uneven development", p.417

[812]For a description of Mečiar's patronage and clientelist practices, see Frydman, Murphy and Rapaczynski, *Capitalism*, pp.55-66

governmental coalition set up by Mečiar in November 1994 with the Slovak National Party and the Federation of Slovak Workers were former communists[813].

For all these reasons, "chauvino-communism" -the overwhelmingly opportunistic union between Mečiar and the former red nomenklatura around nationalist and populist themes- became an integral part of the Slovak post-communist political life and contributed to the break-up of the Czechoslovak state.
More generally, Mečiar's rise to preeminence and power in Slovak politics (what Samuel Abrahám calls the "phenomenon Mečiar"[814]) was the result of his skilful exploitation of the Slovak grievances against the Czechs, as well as of Slovakia's longing for a charismatic leader. If anything, Mečiar is a "pure" pragmatic[815], who understood that "chauvino-communism" was the surest way to reach power in post-communist Slovakia, and was ready to do so at the price of the Czechoslovak republic.

The Czechoslovak case is in this respect relatively close to the Yugoslav case, and, to a certain extent, Mečiar used the same tactic as Milosevic - with however three fundamental distinctions.

Firstly, whereas Serb nationalism is traditionally "expansionist" and grounded in the dream of a "Greater Serbia"[816], Slovak nationalism has remained mostly "defensive" and state-claiming. Notwithstanding the wild imaginings of some isolated Slovak intellectuals[817], Mečiar could not appeal to the myth of a "Greater Slovakia" and never intended to lay claims on Czech territory.

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[813]Viviane du Castel, "Slovaquie: à la recherche d'une reconnaissance internationale", *Défense Nationale*, 53ème année, Août-Septembre 1997, p.85

[814]Samuel Abrahám, "Early Elections in Slovakia: A State of Deadlock", *Government and Opposition*, volume 30, n°1, Winter 1995, pp.88-89

[815]See chapter 6; Miroslav Kusý, "V. Mečiar je cistý pragmatik", *Lidové Noviny*, 16/06/1992, p.8 (see also an English translation of this article in *The Guardian*, 17 July 1992)

[816]See for example Anzulovic, *Heavenly*; Bennett, *Yugoslavia*; Timothy Judah, *The Serbs: Myth, Reality and the Destruction of Yugoslavia* (New Haven and London; Yale University Press; 1997).

[817]See chapter 6.

Secondly, the "chauvino-communism" of Mečiar and his followers expressed itself within an altogether strikingly different political environment. Whereas Milosevic's "interlocutors" were nationalists such as Franjo Tudjman, Mečiar's rhetoric was met with the benevolent moral authority of Havel. This is important since it probably made it impossible for Mečiar to resort to force to achieve his goals: an unilateral secession would have been extremely difficult to justify in front of the international community, because of both Havel's prestige and the values promoted by the international community.

Finally, Mečiar did not dispose in Slovakia of the military means that Milosevic could marshal in his bid to establish a "Greater Serbia". The Czechoslovak army did not side with either the Czechs or the Slovaks during the events which led to the break-up of the state.

This brief and fragmentary comparison between Milosevic and Mečiar could therefore serve to highlight and further illustrate the extent of the potential threat that "chauvino-communism" posed in post-communist Czechoslovakia.

Conclusions

This chapter has argued that the legacies of communism (economic, politico-social,"semantic" and institutional) and the ambiguous links that it entertained with nationalism contributed to the break-up of Czechoslovakia - if only because it made possible after 1989 the emergence of "chauvino-communism".

There is a prevalent feeling in the literature that under communism the past was merely "frozen" or "anesthetized": Czech and Slovak nationalisms were therefore "sleeping beauties" waiting to be reawekened. Havel once characteristically wrote that

> one could say that communism was an *anesthesia of sorts* and that society is now awakening to a state that existed before having been anesthetized. All the problems that predated this anesthesia are now coming back, to everyone's astonishment[818].

There are however at least two caveats to this approach.

It seems difficult to detect such thing as a historical, "primordial" hatred between Czechs and Slovaks, somehow bound to provoke the division of their common state[819].
What is more, one should not, as the present chapter makes clear, underestimate the extent to which communism also created its own, new problems as far as Czech-Slovak relations were concerned: history was not simply "frozen" during forty years. Four decades of communist rule did not help to build a constructive relation between Czechs and Slovaks but the goal of this last section will however be to somewhat nuance this assessment and present "mitigating circumstances".

First of all (and this should not be seen as incompatible with a rejection of a "sleeping beauty" proposition) after 1989, Czech and Slovak policy-makers who tried to save the common state had to overcome not only the legacies of communism but also the legacies of the pre-communist era[820]. The Czechoslovak state was founded in 1918 around the political, cultural, economic and numerical dominance of the Czech nation and when the communist regime federalised the state in 1969, it was in many respects too little and too late. As Leff already pointed out in 1988, "this belated formal recognition of Slovakia's equal national status within the state has many of the characteristics of a last resort, not least of which is the possibility that it has come too late to animate the lost good will of previous generations"[821].

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[818] quoted in Vladimir Tismaneanu, *Reinventing Politics: Eastern Europe from Stalin to Havel* (New York; Toronto; The Free Press; 1992, 1993), p.289. Tismaneanu also quotes Adam Michnik: "the end of communism meant the opening of a Pandora's box. Into that vacuum began to creep *the demons from bygone epochs* : ideologies proclaiming chauvinism and xenophobia, populism and intolerance" (emphasis added).

[819] See chapter 6

[820] Ivan Volgyes, "The Legacies of Communism: An Introductory Essay", in Barany and Volgyes, *The Legacies*, pp.1-2

[821] Leff, *National Conflict*, p.4

Throughout the existence of Czechoslovakia, there were persistent tensions between Czechs and Slovaks and persistent desires, if not outright attempts, by Slovaks to secure greater "autonomy (if not "independence") from the Czechs : the communist experience is thus merely one part of a larger picture.

Communism has certainly *aggravated* the mutual grievances between Czechs and Slovaks, it has also *changed* the nature of Czech-Slovak conflicts and tensions, but it did not *create* them[822].

Our earlier reference to the communist ethnofederation as having institutionalised Czech and Slovak predominance within federal republics with some features of "virtual nation-states" is in this context an instructive example. The federalisation "crystallised" Czech and Slovak conflicts, but the process of consolidation of Czech or Slovak identities largely predated the communist era. Even in the arguably more ambiguous case of the Slovaks, the cultural development experienced under the First republic and the (even if "shameful") self-confidence gained during the Slovak state had already firmly established the existence of a Slovak national identity[823].

Secondly, it is less than clear whether we can reasonably contend that the Czechoslovak federation broke up in 1992 because it had been between 1969 and 1989 a "communist-engineered" federation. It seems impossible to assert that the chances of survival of a common state between the Czechs and the Slovaks would have been higher, had Czechoslovakia not become in 1948 a communist state.

Indeed, there is no real evidence that the management of interethnic conflicts in multinational polities under democratic political systems is more "efficient". "Democratically-engineered" ethnofederations in Canada or Belgium have also been continuously and regularly plagued by tensions between their ethnic minorities. Contrarily to Czechoslovakia, the Canadian and

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[822]See for instance Terry McNeill, 'State and Nationality Under Communism", in Jack Hayward and R.N. Berki (eds), *State and Society in Contemporary Europe* (New York; St-Martin's Press; 1979), p.130.

[823]See Chapter 1, p.60.

Belgian states have of course managed to maintain their integrity, but one could legitimately wonder whether this is likely to be the case five or ten years from now[824].

Given all this, the starting hypothesis of this chapter could be reformulated in the following terms: the problem might not be with "communist" ethnofederations *per se*, but more generally with the concept of "ethnofederation"- a federation based on ethnicity. The break-up of Czechoslovakia could be explained in terms of the structure of the Czechoslovak federation itself, explicitly based on the national principle: Czechs and (versus) Slovaks.

The next chapter therefore tries to shed new light on the break-up, by considering to what extent a bi-national country like Czechoslovakia could be said to be more or less "stable" than a multi-national state like Yugoslavia or the Soviet Union.

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[824]See for example an article in the Independent which claims that Belgium might be on the way to a "Czech and Slovak solution", i.e a peaceful breakup (Katherine Butler, "Sickened Belgium is tearing itself apart", *The Independent on Sunday*, 26 April 1998, p.18). Similarly, Alain Dieckhoff argues that "the velvet divorce between Czechs and Slovaks is ... a model of peaceful state dissociation that some Flemings and Catalans have studied with care" (Alain Dieckhoff, "Europe Occidentale: l'Effervescence Nationalitaire", *Politique Internationale*, n°78, hiver 1997-1998, p.133)

PART IV

CHAPTER 9

THE UNBEARABLE LIGHTNESS OF A BIPOLAR STATE: A SYSTEMIC APPROACH TO THE BREAK-UP OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA

After having examined in the previous chapters several explanations for the break-up of the Czechoslovak state in 1992 (the institutional deadlock, the role of political leadership during the democratic transition, the reemergence of Slovak and Czech nationalisms after 1989, as well as the legacies of communism), this chapter adopts the analogy of the balance of power in order to demonstrate that the ethnopolitics of Czechoslovakia and the eventual failure to preserve the integrity of the state after the fall of communism was to a large extent conditioned by certain systemic and structural features.

In other words, this chapter aims to provide an insight into the arena and the "rules of the game" of Czechoslovak ethnopolitics and considers a new layer of explanations for the break-up of Czechoslovakia: the "system" itself.

As a starting point and framework of analysis, the "systemic" approach adopted will primarily base itself on two works.

First, Morton A Kaplan's *Systems and Process in International Politics*, in which Kaplan distinguishes six distinct types of international systems: (1) the "balance of power" system, (2) the loose bipolar system, (3) the tight bipolar system, (4) the universal system, (5) the hierarchical system in its directive and non-directive forms, and (6) the unit veto system[825].

And secondly, Sabrina Petra Ramet's *Nationalism and Federalism in Yugoslavia, 1962-1991*, in which Ramet applies Kaplan's typology of systems of international behaviour to the study of the ethnic politics of Yugoslavia. By designating "ethnic groups, rather than states as actors in the system and treat[ing] the state, rather than a group of states, as the conceptual

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[825]For a full description of these six systems, see Morton A. Kaplan, *Systems and Process in International Politics* (Huntington, New York; Robert E.Krieger; 1975, first edition 1957), pp.21-53

system"[826], she categorises the Yugoslav state as having gradually "evolved from a configuration that paralleled a loose bipolar system (1918-1963) [where the main cleavage was the conflict of interests between Serbs and Croats] to a balance-of-power model" (from 1963 to its de facto violent disintegration in 1992)[827], when the recognition of the separate identity of Slovenes, Macedonians or Muslisms came into effect[828].

This chapter proceeds from the assumption that the adoption of a similar methodological approach constitutes a valuable way to look at the break-up of Czechoslovakia. Categorising and studying the Czechoslovak state as an autonomous "system" allows to draw some implications about its inherent stability or instability and offers a new perspective on the "velvet divorce" of 1992.
In more theoretical terms, following Kenneth Waltz, the aim is "to show how the structure of the system affects the interacting units and how they in turn affect the structure"[829].

The introduction of game theory has been deliberately rejected on several grounds.
Game theory is undoubtedly a useful tool in social science, but applying it to a study of the break-up of Czechoslovakia would have met with several conceptual problems.

Firstly, as Shaun Hargreaves Heap and Yanis Varoufakis emphasise in *Game Theory: A Critical Introduction*, "the point about games is that objectives and rules are known in advance"[830] – a situation which appears to be the opposite of post-1989 Czechoslovakia

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[826]Sabrina P. Ramet, *Nationalism and Federalism in Yugoslavia, 1962-1991* (Bloomington and Indianapolis; Indiana University Press; 1992), p.4

[827]*ibid.*, p.5

[828]Titoist Yugoslavia consisted after the constitutional reform of 1974 of six republics (Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Macedonia, Bosnia-Hercegovina, Montenegro), plus two autonomous regions rattached to Serbia (Kosovo-Mehtoja and Voivodina).

[829]Kenneth N.Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (New York; MacGraw Hill; 1979), p.40

[830]Shaun P. Hargreaves Heap and Yanis Varoufakis, *Game Theory: A Critical Introduction* (London, New York; Routledge; 1995), p.xi

where one cannot deny the depth of the uncertainties which marked the transition from communism to democracy.
The rules of the games had to be created anew and the objectives of most political actors (and above all, of Mečiar) were ever shifting and contradictory. The assumption "that individuals know the rules of the game - ...that they know all the possible actions and how the actions combine to yield particular pay-offs for each player"[831] seems unconvincing in the Czechoslovak case.

Secondly, game theory is usually criticised for being more "predictive" than "explanatory" and would have at best given an insight into how things should have been rather than why they actually happened the way they did[832].

Thirdly, game theory relies on a subjective characterisation of the agents and actors of the game and of their "rationality".
In the Czechoslovak context, this would have implied a dangerous neglect of the multifaceted and non-unitary nature of the agents: there was (and there is) for instance, as demonstrated in chapters 2 and 6, no easy way to define Czech and Slovak political cultures or to draw a typology of Czech and Slovak political elites.

Finally and perhaps even more importantly, game theory would have led the dissertation away from its original focus and would not have provided simple answers to the complex issue of the break-up of Czechoslovakia.

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831 *ibid.*, p.28

832 *ibid.*, p.12

Balance of power, actors and poles: some definitions and a framework of analysis

To start with, it is essential to define three notions essential to our analysis: balance of power, actors and poles.

Firstly, the concept of balance of power is at the centre of most systemic approaches and remains, despite its limitations and close associations with the realist and neo-realist schools of international relations theory, one of the most powerful analytical tools to look at a political system[833].
Clearly, then, it should be made clear from the start that a distinction is made between Kaplan's use of "balance of power" as merely one of six possible international systems and the use adopted in this chapter of "balance of power" as a generic term[834].

The meaning of balance of power is in itself deeply ambiguous and contested, and, as pointed out by Paul W.Schroeder,

> Students of international politics do not need to be told of the unsatisfactory state of the balance of power theory. The problems are well known: the ambiguous nature of the concept and the numerous ways it has been defined, the various distinct and partly contradictory meanings given to it in practice and the divergent purposes it serves (description, analysis, prescription and propaganda); and the apparent failure of attempts clearly to define balance of power as a system and specify its operating rules[835].

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[833]See for example the Special issue on the balance of power of the *Review of International Studies*, 1989 (15), pp.75-214 and Michael Sheehan, *The Balance of Power: History and Theory* (London and New York; Routledge; 1996)

[834]In his critique of Kaplan's six models, Waltz indeed argues that "[b]y identifying his principal system, the balance of power, with the historical condition of condition among five or so great powers, [Kaplan] obscures the fact that balance-of- power theory applies in all situations where two or more units coexist in a self-help system" (Waltz, *Theory*, p.57)

[835]Paul W.Schroeder, "The Nineteenth-century System: Balance of Power or Political Equilibrium ?", *Review of International Studies*, vol.15, 1989, p.135

However, since "[t]he trouble with the balance of power... is not that it has no meaning, but that it has too many meanings"[836], what matters for the purpose of the chapter is to adopt a *consistent* definition.

Balance of power will be conceived in its descriptive, as opposed to normative, sense - as a system rather than a policy[837] ("a collection of states, autonomous units of power and policy, involved in such intimacy of interrelationship as to make reciprocal impact feasible"[838]). Such a deterministic definition of balance of power should best shed light on the relationship between the structure of the Czechoslovak state and the behaviour of the actors of the system[839].

The second important step is therefore to specify what the actors of the system "Czechoslovakia" were.

By actors is meant every *potential* player on Czechoslovak ethnopolitics and one could in fact differentiate three principal types of actors in the Czechoslovak state: the ""national", the "sub-national" (or "non-member national actors"), and the "universal" actors.

The "national" actors are the two so-called "state-founding" (*státotvorný národ*) nations[840], the Czechs and the Slovaks. But Czechoslovakia has also been consistently inhabited during the 74 years of its existence by several minorities -Germans, Hungarians, Romanies, Poles, etc- which could be defined as "sub-national" (or "non-member national") actors.

The "universal" actor in the Czechoslovak system is the state itself, the authority and power of the "centre" (for instance, the "federal" centre from January 1969 to December 1992).

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[836]Inis L. Claude, Jr, *Power and International Relations* (New York; Random House; 1962), p.13, quoted in James E. Dougherty and Robert L. Pfaltzgraff, Jr, *Contending Theories of International Relations: a comprehensive survey* (New York; HarperCollins; 1990), p.31. Hans Morgenthau for instance distinguished at least four different meanings of balance of power, Martin Wight nine ("The Balance of Power", in Herbert Butterfield and Martin Martin (eds), *Diplomatic Investigations: Essays in the Theory of International Politics*; London; George Allen & Unwin; 1966; p.151), and Ernst Haas eight ("The Balance of Power: Prescription, Concept or Propaganda ?", *World Politics*, V, July 1953, pp.442-477)

[837]Sheehan, *The Balance of Power*, p.53

[838]I.Claude, *Power*, p.42, quoted in Sheehan, *The Balance of Power*, p.53

[839]As Sheehan put it, "the key feature about the systemic approach to the balance of power is that it posits a direct relationship between the structure of the state system and the behaviour of states within the system... state behaviour is seen as being governed by the nature of the system" (*ibid.*, pp.76 and 80)

[840]See for instance on the concept of *státotvorný národ*, Felak, *"At the Price"*, pp.182-183

This chapter deliberately concentrates on "internal" actors, *direct* players in Czechoslovak politics - as opposed to "external" actors, which only exerted an indirect, even if in practice crucial, impact on Czechoslovak politics and have been considered in chapter 4.
A further distinction has to be made between "actors" and "poles", by defining poles as autonomous and above all politically-salient (having a significant impact on Czechoslovak ethnopolitics) "centres of power".
Thus, an actor is not necessarily a pole, even if it can have the potential to become one - as exemplified for instance by the position of Slovakia's Hungarian minority (or inversely, a pole can lose its status and be reduced to the position of an actor - as the fate of the federal centre after 1989 examined later would appear to demonstrate). Moreover, if several actors form a coalition of interests, the resulting bloc of influence is considered as a single "centre of power", in fact a single pole.

We therefore adopt a somewhat hierarchical or concentric view of the system "Czechoslovakia", where the system is composed of poles, themselves subsequently composed of one or more actors.

Following this analytical framework, post-communist Czechoslovakia will be described as closely resembling a "*bi*-polar" state, characterised by the overwhelmingly dominant cleavage between its *two* constituent Czech and Slovak nations - by opposition to a *"multi*-polar" state, defined as including within its borders *three or more* "poles" of political interests.
Introducing such a distinction should therefore show that *bi*-polar Czechoslovakia was to an extent inherently more "unstable" than a *multi*-polar state like for instance Yugoslavia or the Soviet Union and that the events of 1989-1992 that led to the split of the state did not take place in a vacuum, but were in many respects predetermined by the systemic "rules of the game", i.e the bipolar structure of the state.

To achieve these objectives, the chapter first briefly expounds why Kaplan's model of international systems might be useful to an explanation of the division of Czechoslovakia. After having identified and overcome three potential problems with the use of a systemic model to the study of a single state-unit, we proceed to define Czechoslovakia according to three of the six distinct models of international systems described by Kaplan ("universal",

"loose bipolar" and "tight bipolar"), and eventually show why post-1989 Czechoslovakia suddenly *became* "bipolar", after the collapse of the communist "centralist" (even if theoretically federalist) regime and the eventual capitulation of the federal centre in front of the growing assertiveness of two Czech and Slovak "poles" with divergent interests.

A second section then examines the implications of this "bipolarity" on the stability of the Czechoslovak state and argues that, for several reasons that are developed, a "bipolar" state such as Czechoslovakia was in many ways inherently unstable.

A third section consequently considers whether, given this seemingly intrinsic instability of a "bipolar" Czechoslovakia, the establishment of an alternative "multipolar" state could have prevented the break-up. Two options that could have transformed Czechoslovakia into a potentially more "stable" multi-polar state are examined: the upgrading and institutionalisation of Slovakia's Hungarian minority as a "third" constituent part of the state, or perhaps more importantly, the creation of a tripartite Bohemian-Moravian / Silesian - Slovak federation.
However, it will be contended that neither of these two possibilities were viable or politically credible in the context of Czechoslovak ethnopolitics between 1989 and 1992.

Finally, the positive aspects of the Czechoslovak bipolarity are emphasized. The dual nature of the Czechoslovak state could paradoxically be seen as one of the factors that explains, and in fact made possible, the peaceful character of the dissolution.

An "internal-systemic" or "subsystemic" approach to the break-up of Czechoslovakia

Kaplan's model is intended as a simple, if necessarily reductionist, tool of analysis of the international system as a whole.
However, as we have seen, this chapter derives from the assumption that Kaplan's model could be applied to the study of the ethnopolitics of a state like Czechoslovakia and might thus shed a new light on the division of this country in 1992.

There are nevertheless three important caveats to this approach.

First of all, using Czechoslovakia as a "system" does not take into account the fact that Czechoslovak domestic/internal politics was itself influenced, and perhaps even conditioned, by international and environmental factors - as the first break-up of the state under Nazi pressure in 1939 makes clear.
Therefore, a distinction has to be made at this stage in the level of analysis between the traditional systemic approaches of international relations which are mostly concerned with the "world" system as a whole (world politics) and the reductionist focus of this chapter which purports to consider Czechoslovakia as a self-containing unit of analysis, independently of the external constraints studied in Chapter 4.
The approach adopted could therefore perhaps more adequately be termed "subsystemic" (by opposition to systemic). John Burton states that a subsystem "is a system in itself that can be isolated"[841] and William R. Thompson gives four conditions for the specification of a subsystem: "regularity and intensity of interactions so that a change in one part affect other parts; general proximity of actors; internal and external recognition of the subsystem as distinctive; and provision of at least two, and probably more, actors in the subsystem"[842].

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[841] J.W. Burton, *Systems, States, Diplomacy and Rules* (Cambridge; Cambridge University Press; 1968), p.14, quoted in Dougherty and Pfaltzgraff *Contending Theories*, p.137

[842] William R. Thompson, "The Regional Subsystem: A Conceptual Explication and a Propositional Inventory", *International Studies Quarterly*, 17, N°1, March 1973, p.101, quoted in Dougherty and Pfaltzgraff, *Contending Theories*, p.164

On this basis, a study of Czechoslovakia as an "isolated" system is valid, since Czechoslovakia fulfilled Thompson's four conditions. The interactions between the "national", "subnational" and "universal" actors were regular, intense and their relative position and power evolved throughout the years. The actors of the system "Czechoslovakia" were closely interconnected to each other and Czechoslovakia was a state recognised by the international community, in which there were consistently *at least* two distinct and recognisable "players" - most significantly (and continuously) the Czechs and the Slovaks.
Therefore, "Czechoslovakia" conforms to Kenneth Waltz's definition of a system as "a set of interacting units":

> a system consists of a structure, and the structure is the systems-level component that makes it possible to think of the units as forming a set as distinct from a mere collection[843].

Secondly, systemic approaches of international relations have been widely criticised for elaborating theories removed from the reality of politics and therefore unable to capture what Stanley Hoffmann calls the "stuff of politics"[844].
This critique is difficult to discard, but the fact that this chapter specifically endeavours to apply systems theory to the concrete case of Czechoslovakia should allow us to, at least in part, eliminate this caveat.

Finally, and perhaps most problematically, it has been commonly pointed out that systemic approaches are invariably based on the dubious and contestable assumption of the presence of "rational" actors[845].

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[843]Waltz, *Theory*, p.40. In a similar vein, Barry Buzan defines a system as "a group of parts or units whose interactions are significant enough to justify seeing them in some sense as a coherent set" (Barry Buzan, Charles Jones and Richard Little, *The Logic of Anarchy: Neorealism to Structural Realism*; New York; Columbia University Press; 1993; p.29)

[844]Dougherty and Pfaltzgraff, *Contending Theories*, p.173

[845]This point is indeed acknowledged by Kaplan himself (*System*, p.2)

On the one hand, it seems fair to acknowledge some seemingly "irrational" aspects of the break-up of Czechoslovakia: the Slovaks had no evident economic interests to leave their richer Czech neighbours and the division of the state did to an extent damage the security prospects of the Slovaks and the Czechs[846].

On the other hand, however, what seemed to predominate between 1989 and 1992 is the pragmatism and electoral opportunism of Czech and Slovak leaders, such as Klaus and Mečiar, and their cold-blooded political "rationality"[847].

A categorisation of the system "Czechoslovakia"

Having thus shown the utility of a "systemic" analysis of Czechoslovakia, we now turn to the classification of Czechoslovakia according to Kaplan's models.

The definition of three types of actors ("national", "sub-national" and "universal") is potentially useful, but it is incomplete and merely inadequate if it fails to consider that the system "Czechoslovakia" (like every system studied in international relations) was not static but dynamic and subject to changes in its internal balance of power.

In other words, a systemic analysis of ethnopolitics in the Czechoslovak state can only make sense and become relevant in a chronological, evolutive perspective. To quote Kaplan,

> since a system has an identity over time, it is necessary to be able to describe it at various times, that is, to describe its successive states. It is also necessary to be able to locate the variable changes which gives rise to different succeeding states"[848] .

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[846]Cf chapter 4

[847]See chapters 5, 6 and 7

[848]Kaplan, *System*, p.4

Looking for shifts in the "internal balance of power" and "distribution of capabilities" among poles and actors of the system "Czechoslovakia"[849] will therefore be a primary objective of the systemic analysis, and one could *a priori* discern two major historical turning points in the ethnopolitics of Czechoslovakia: 1945 and 1969[850].

1918-1945: Czechoslovakia as a "universal system"

The interwar Czechoslovak republic (1918-1938) was a truly multinational state, where the Czechs and Slovaks constituted only around 65 percent of the population. More than 22 percent of the republic citizens were Germans, 4.8 percent were Magyars, 3.8 percent Ruthenians, 1.3 percent Jews and 0.6 percent Poles.

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[849]Robert O. Keohane, "Realism, Neorealism and the Study of World Politics", in Robert Keohane (ed.), *Neorealism and its critics* (New York; Columbia University Press; 1986), p.15; Waltz, *Theory*, p.97

[850]I deliberately do not consider here the events of 1938-1945 and the first breakup of Czechoslovakia following the Munich agreements, because they seem to be more the consequences of the larger international environment than the result of purely domestic ethnopolitics (the German minority - but also Slovak nationalists - exploited by Hitler as "fifth columns" in his determination to "crush" Czechoslovakia).

Table 9.1 : Ethnic structure of Czechoslovakia in 1930 (census data)

	Czech Lands (Bohemia-Moravia)	Slovakia	Ruthenia	The whole state
Population in thousand	10 674	3 331	725	14 730
Of which, in percentages:				
Czechs	68.4	3.7	(3.8)	51.1
Slovaks	0.4	67.6	(1.0)	15.8
Ruthenians	0.2	2.9	63.0	3.8
Germans	29.5	4.6	1.9	22.3
Magyars	0.1	17.8	15.4	4.8
Poles	0.9	0.2	-	0.6
Jews by nationality	0.3	2.0	12.9	1.3
Others	0.2	1.2	2.0	0.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
of which Jews by religion	1.1	4.1	14.1	1.3

Source: Jaroslav Krejčí and Pavel Machonin, *Czechoslovakia, 1918-92: A Laboratory for Social Change*, p.12

Given this ethnic diversity, "Czechoslovakism" was the (necessary) cornerstone of the legitimacy of the state. It formally and constitutionally (in 1920) established Czechoslovakia as the national state of the "Czechoslovak" nation, and granted to its numerous non-"Czechoslovak" citizens the status of minorities.

Later historical developments have made clear that the existence of a so-called "Czechoslovak" nation was to a large extent purely fictional: the Slovaks were politically, economically and culturally considered as the younger, less developed brothers of the Czechs,

and, as discussed earlier, Czechoslovakism hardly concealed the (even if benevolent) domination of the state by the Czech nation[851].

In many respects, interwar Czechoslovakia could thus be assimilated to Kaplan's "universal" system - "a semi-unified political system under a world government, in which a central actor dominates peripheral actors enrolled on a formally voluntary basis"[852]. The "central actor" in pre-WWII Czechoslovakia was the Czech nation, which enjoyed a dominant position somewhat similar to that of the ethnic Russians in the Soviet Union - the paradigm of a "universal system" according to Ramet[853].

The internal balance of power of the first Czechoslovak republic could be represented by the following table, with one "pole" (the Czechs) and several more (Germans, Slovaks, Magyars) or less (Ruthenians, Poles, Jews) significant "actors".

Table 9.2 : The system "Czechoslovakia", 1918-1938

Pole	Actors
Czechs	Germans Slovaks Magyars Ruthenians Poles Jews

[851]Raymond Pearson for instance calls the interwar Czechoslovak republic a "Czech empire" (Raymond Pearson, *National Minorities in Eastern Europe: 1848-1945*; London and Basingstoke; Macmillan; 1983; p.155)

[852]Ramet, *Nationalism*, p.5

[853]"The Soviet Union closely resembles the universal system...the Great Russians dominate a multiethnic realm in which the non-Russian republics enjoy the formal right of secession" (*ibid.*, pp.4-5)

1945-1989: "virtual" bipolarity

However, 1945 constitutes a first rupture in the ethnopolitics of the system "Czechoslovakia" and a fundamental change in the "distribution of capabilities" between poles and actors.
The post-war expulsion of the entire Sudeten German population and, to a lesser extent, the transfer of Ruthenia to the Soviet Union and the aborted attempts to negotiate the exchange of Slovakia's Hungarian minority for Slovaks living in Hungary[854], fundamentally altered the ethnic structure, and as a consequence, the internal balance of power of the state[855].
As demonstrated by the tables below, the "sub-national" or "non-member national" actors of Czechoslovakia saw their numerical weight and their corresponding political and economic influence dramatically and abruptly reduced, in both the Czech lands and Slovakia.
The example of the German minority, which still constituted in 1930 29.5 percent of the population of the Czech lands and 4.7 percent in Slovakia, is probably the most eloquent: by 1961, there was only 1.4 percent of ethnic Germans in the Czech lands and 0.1 percent in Slovakia.
The disappearance of the German minority as a political factor in the Czechoslovak state marked a profound shift in the Czechoslovak balance of power and left the Czechs and the Slovaks virtually sole masters in the state.

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[854]On the Hungarian question, see for example Brubaker, *Nationalism reframed*, p.157.

[855]Another minority which virtually disappeared after World War II from the Czechoslovak political and cultural life was the Jewish population. Following the establishment of the Nazi protectorate of Bohemia-Moravia and of the Slovak state, 89 percent of the Czech Jews and 83 percent of Slovak Jews did not survive the war. It should furthermore be added that the Jews hardly constituted an autonomous "actor" in interwar Czechoslovakia, because of the strong assimilationist tendencies which prevailed within the Jewish associations -as exemplified by the activities of the League of Czech Jews (*Svaz Cechu Zidu*). See Pearson, *National Minorities*, p.200 ; Erich Kulka, "The Jews in Czechoslovakia between 1918 and 1968", in Norman Stone and Eduard Strouhal (eds), *Czechoslovakia: Crossroads and Crises, 1918-88* (Basingstoke, London; Macmillan; 1989), pp.271-296 ; Ezra Mendelsohn, *The Jews of East Central Europe between the World Wars* (Bloomington; Indiana University Press; 1983), pp.130-169.

Table 9.3 : The development of ethnic structure (census data-percentages): the Czech Lands

	1910	1930	1961
Czechs	63.4	68.4	94.3
Germans	35.0	29.5	1.4
Poles	1.6	0.9	0.7
Slovaks	-	0.4	2.9
Others	-	0.8	0.7

Slovakia

	1910	1930	1961
Slovaks	57.7	67.7	85.3
Magyars	30.3	17.6	12.4
Germans	6.8	4.7	0.1
Ruthenians	3.4	2.9	0.9
Czechs	-	3.7	1.1
Others	1.8	3.4	0.2

Source: Jaroslav Krejčí and Pavel Machonin, *Czechoslovakia, 1918-92: A Laboratory for Social Change*, pp.51-52

It is only after 1945 that it becomes possible to *theoretically* describe Czechoslovakia as a "bipolar" unit, characterised by the polarisation between the two overwhelmingly numerically and politically dominant "national actors", the Czechs and the Slovaks.

But the evolution of Czechoslovakia from an "universal" to a "bipolar" system after 1945 was also prompted by the rapidly changing nature of the relations between Czechs and Slovaks. The Slovaks emerged from the war with the experience of both autonomy (during the short-lived Second Republic between October 1938 and March 1939) and independence (from 1939 to 1945). The Slovak state was a Nazi-puppet state with strong authoritarian and fascist leanings but it furthered the Slovaks' sense of distinctiveness vis-à-vis the Czechs and made definitely obsolete the ideology of "Czechoslovakism": "at the war's end, the basis for reconstituting the Czech-Slovak relationship was a generalized commitment to proceed on the

basis of 'equals with equals', enunciated during the war and enshrined in the Košice proclamation that set the framework for provisional governance of the liberated territory in 1945"[856].

From 1945, the Slovaks were not satisfied by the position of "junior partners" or "younger brothers", and aspired to be recognised as members of a distinct nation.

After having suffered some significant political setbacks in the aftermath of the communist takeover of power, notably during the purges of the so-called "bourgeois nationalists" and the subsequent "Dark fifties"[857], the 1960s saw the reemergence of Slovak self-confidence when the opposition to the centralist policies of Novotný resulted in the "Slovak spring" of 1962-1963[858].

The rise of the political influence of Slovakia was furthermore accompanied (or the logical consequence of, if we adopt Paul Kennedy's conception of systemic changes of balance of power[859]) by the continuous ascent of the region's relative economic power compared to the Czech lands[860].

Between 1945 and 1969 therefore, Slovakia progressively emerged as a "pole" -a centre of influence able to contest credibly Czech domination, at both a political and economic level.

For all these reasons, one could suggest that Czechoslovakia, from 1945 to 1969, closely followed Kaplan's categorisation of a "loose bipolar system" (applied by Ramet to Yugoslavia between 1918 and 1941 and 1945 and 1963[861]).

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[856]Leff, *National Conflict*, p.88

[857]The expression is from E.Steiner, *The Slovak Dilemma*, p.93

[858]See chapter 7

[859]Paul Kennedy argues in *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000* (London; Fontana Press; 1989) that systemic changes in the balance of power are brought about by changes in relative economic and technological standings (p.20).

[860]Chapter 3 sheds light on the process of catching-up of Slovakia, in terms of industrialisation, mechanisation and modernisation.

[861]Ramet, *Nationalism,* pp.6-7

As defined by Ramet, a "loose" bipolar system "presumes two permanently hostile core powers around which lesser powers cluster in a non-random fashion that approximates equal distribution of allies. Within a multinational state, this configuration results if ethnic groups are polarized on a salient and durable issue or issues and divide into two fairly stable camps"[862].

As shown in the table below, a systemic representation of post-World War II Czechoslovakia should therefore *theoretically* take into account the rise of Slovakia from the status of "actor" to the status of "pole" as well as the dramatic diminution of the importance of the remaining "actors" (the non-Czech and non-Slovak minorities).

Table 9.4

Post-WWII Czechoslovakia: a "theoretical" bipolarity

Poles	Actors
Czechs Slovaks	Magyars Germans Poles etc

Communist Czechoslovakia as a *de facto* "universal system"

After 1945, the official federalisation of Czechoslovakia in January 1969 appears as a second turning-point in the ethnopolitics of Czechoslovakia. From 1969 until its dissolution on 31 December 1992, Czechoslovakia was a dual federation composed of the Czech and the Slovak republics.

This constitutional arrangement institutionalised the ethnic cleavage between Czechs and Slovaks and the federal Czechoslovak state could be tentatively described as a "tight" bipolar system, where the Czech-Slovak polarisation was officially the *only* significant and politically-salient divide.

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[862] *ibid.*, p.5

The increasingly influential role played by the Slovaks in the state and party apparatus was illustrated by the nomination in 1969 of Husák and Biľak as number one and number two of the Czechoslovak Communist party[863], and there was a general trend in direction of a higher visibility of the Slovaks:

> [i]n the institutions of the central government, where they had occupied on average only 17.3 percent of ministerial posts during the period 1948-1967, the Slovaks were holding on average 30 percent of the portfolios between 1969 and 1987, as in the leading authorities of the Party, in the politburo and the secretary of the Central Committee of the KSC [864].

However, both 1945 and 1969 had a limited impact on Czechoslovakia's internal balance of power, and the collapse of the communist regime in 1989 seems to be the turning point in Czechoslovak ethnopolitics.

During the communist era, the Czechoslovak Communist Party exercised a pervasive monopoly of power on Czechoslovak political, economic and cultural life and was the dominant "actor" of the system: its function matched to a large extent Kaplan's understanding of an "universal" actor. As chapter 7 demonstrated, communism's use of coercion prevented the expression of ethnic grievances between Czechs and Slovaks: *de jure* a "bipolar" system, communist Czechoslovakia was *de facto* close to a "universal system", just as the interwar first republic was. The ideology of "Czechoslovakism" was superseded by the official Marxist-Leninist ideology and nationality policy[865].

Going back to our definition of "poles" as "influential centres of power", in communist Czechoslovakia, the Party was the only salient centre of power and, far from being "bipolar", Czechoslovakia was in many ways "mono or uni-polar".

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[863]Husák remained president of the Czechoslovak Socialist republic until December 1989 (he had to let the direction of the Communist Party to the Czech Miloš Jakeš in December 1987) and Biľak was ousted in 1987 from his position in the Central Committee.

[864]Wehrlé, *Le Divorce*, p.213

[865]See chapter 7

For all these reasons, only after the "velvet revolution" did the potential, formal "bi-polarity" of the Czechoslovak state become a political reality. In 1989, the "institutional" Czech and Slovak poles of the dual federation finally gained political significance.

1989-1992: Czechoslovakia as a "bipolar system"

We hence turn to what primarily interests us in the perspective of an explanation of the break-up of 1992, the period 1989 -1992.
Between December 1989 and December 1992, Czechoslovakia was for the first time of its history a genuine ("tight") bipolar system, and this despite two caveats.

Firstly, as the data of the 1991 census below indicate, Czechoslovakia was not, even in 1991, inhabited only by Czechs and Slovaks. Assuming for the moment that Moravians and Silesians are ethnic Czechs (see below), the largest, Hungarian-speaking, minority still represented 3.8 percent of the state population and, crucially, 11 percent of the population of Slovakia.

Table 9.5 : Ethnic groups in Czechoslovakia in 1991 (in percent)

	Total	Czech republic	Slovakia
Czechs	54.0	81.3	1.0
Slovaks	31.0	3.0	85.6
Moravians	8.7	13.2	0.1
Silesians	0.3	0.4	-
Russians	0.1	-	0.1
Ukrainians	0.1	0.1	0.3
Poles	0.3	0.6	-
Germans	0.3	0.5	0.1
Hungarians	3.8	0.2	11.0
Romanies	0.7	0.3	1.5
Others	0.4	0.5	0.2

Source: OECD report, *Politiques et Problèmes régionaux en République Tchèque et en République Slovaque*, p.20

However, in the dual Czechoslovak ethnofederation, the only politically salient cleavage was between Czechs and Slovaks. The institutions inherited from the communist era provided for certain cultural and education rights for the Hungarians -especially through the Cultural Association of Hungarian Working People in Czechoslovakia (CSEMADOK), established in 1949[866]- but did not formally establish a constitutional channel of articulation of minority interests[867].

The second and more important caveat to the qualification of post-communist Czechoslovakia as a bipolar system is the continuing existence between 1989 and 1992 of a "universal actor", the federal centre -embodied by the federal presidency of Václav Havel, the federal ministries and the Federal Assembly.

These federal institutions personified a "Czechoslovak" standpoint, by opposition to specific "Czech" or "Slovak" interests. There was for instance clearly a differentiation between "Czechoslovak" Czechs like Havel and Czech "nationalists"[868] like Klaus and Pithart[869] who came to support "Czech" interests, often contradictory with "Czechoslovak" interests. This divide appears perhaps even more marked if we consider Slovak elites and the divergence of views between, for example, Čalfa and "republic-based" politicians such as Mečiar or Čarnogurský.

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[866] See for example: Batt, *The New Slovakia* p.19; Alfred A. Reisch, "Hungarian Ethnic Parties Prepare for Czechoslovak Elections", *RFE/RL Research Report*, vol.1, n°18, 1 May 1992, p.27

[867] Reisch notes that "[t]he 1960 constitution had referred to the Magyar, Ukrainian, Polish, and German minorities ; their legal status was subsequently defined in Constitutional Law N°144 of 1968, although it was not specified how their rights as minorities should be guaranteed. Even though minorities were entitled to proportional representation in the federal and republican parliaments, magyar and other deputies were bound by communist party rules and discipline and thus could do little to promote the interests of the minorities" (Reisch, "Hungarian Ethnic Parties", p.27)

[868] See Chapter 7 for a definition of the specific nature of Czech nationalism after 1989

[869] Pithart's position on the Czech political landscape was somewhat ambiguous since many Slovaks considered that Pithart (a historian by training) understood the Slovak question more than many other Czech leaders (interview with Róbert Kotian, Bratislava, 08/09/99).

As noted in chapter 7, the expression of a distinct "Czechoslovak" position remained nevertheless marginal and did not acquire a significant level of active public support[870].
In practice therefore, the Czech-Slovak polarisation endured as the main political cleavage and was further enhanced by the widespread *perception* of the federal centre as representative of Czech interests. Prague, capital of the state and of the Czech lands, was widely held by the Slovaks as the symbol of the dominant role of the Czech republic in the federation.
This analysis seems to fit Kaplan's definition of the "tight" bipolar system as a system where the "universal actor" no longer provides a wider frame of reference:

> Even if universal actors continue to exist, the universal actor becomes a microcosmic replica of the tight bipolar... system. For all practical purposes, universal actors will cease to function in the tight bipolar system even if they continue to exist[871].

This phenomenon could be illustrated in the Czechoslovak case by the erosion of the role and powers of the federal institutions between 1989 and 1992.
Both the executive and legislative branches of the federal centre became gradually unable to make an impact on political developments, because the initiative now predominantly lay in the hands of the republican authorities, in essence the Czech and Slovak "poles".
The Federal Assembly grew increasingly powerless in front of the assertiveness of the Republics' legislatures, the Czech and Slovak National Councils, whose powers had been already significantly expanded by the so-called Competence Law of December 1990[872].

Perhaps more symbolically, the influence of the federal president Havel ineluctably diminished[873], until his eventual resignation in July 1992, when he stated that he was not prepared to preside over the break-up of the state and did not wish to "become an obstacle to

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[870]See chapter 7 on the (non)existence of a "Czechoslovak" nationalism

[871]M.Kaplan, *System*, pp.44-45

[872]See for instance Stein, *Czecho/Slovakia*, esp. pp.72-78 and Karol Svoboda, "Legal and Political Events between 1989 and 1992" in Knapp and Bartole, *La Dissoluzione*, pp.66-68

[873]See for example Jan Obrman, "President Havel's diminishing political influence", *RFE / RL Research Report*, 13 March 1992, pp.18-23; Wolchik, "The Czech Republic: Havel", pp.168-194.

the substantial changes in our statehood embarked upon since the [June 1992] parliamentary elections and to the emancipation efforts of the Slovak Republic"[874]:

> I cannot bear responsability for a development upon which I am beginning to lose any influence...the function of federal president no longer enables me to work creatively and constructively[875].

Between 1989 and 1992, the federal centre appeared more and more irrelevant and, to use an analogy with the international system, ultimately hardly more powerful than than the United Nations during the Cold War. The state authorities, the traditional "universal actor" of Czechoslovak ethnopolitics, lost the capacity to act as a pole and a counterweight to the Czech and Slovak centres of power.
After their electoral successes of June 1992, the two leading representatives of Czech and Slovak interests, Klaus and Mečiar, for all purposes beat the federal centre, which subsequently capitulated and autodestructed itself through the ratification by the Federal Assembly of a bill on the dissolution of the common state on November 25, 1992[876].

The definition of Czechoslovakia between 1989 and 1992 as a "bipolar" system would thus appear vindicated rather than contradicted by the continuing existence of the federal centre.

This bipolarity, institutionalised in a bipartite federation, has been regarded as a distinctive feature of Czechoslovak ethnopolitics and a factor which made Czechoslovakia unique among the other "multinational" states (and not only in respect to Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union, the two other communist ethnofederations).

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[874]CSTK, 17 July 1992 and Jan Obrman, "Slovakia Declares Sovereignty ; President Havel Resigns", *RFE / RL Research Report*, vol.1, n°31, 31 July 1992, p.26

[875]as quoted in František Šamalík, "Political Parties and the Split of Czechoslovakia", in Knapp and Bartole, *La Dissoluzione*, p.115.

[876]See for example: Jiří Pehe, "Czechoslovak Parliament Votes to Dissolve Federation", *RFE/RL Research Report*, vol.1, N°48, 4 December 1992, pp.1-5; Sergio Bartole, "Introduzione", in Knapp and Bartole, *La Dissoluzione*, p.XX.

As Katarina Mathernova pointed out[877], Czechoslovakia differed from federal (or confederal) states such as India, Spain, Switzerland, the United States and even Canada[878], which are all divided in *more than two* units.

Ultimately, the closest and most illuminating analogies with Czechoslovakia are perhaps the Norway-Sweden Union which (peacefully) broke up in 1905, and, more recently, Belgium[879]. Belgian ethnopolitics is overwhelmingly -and increasingly- dominated by the Walloon-Flemish cleavage but the divide is somewhat mitigated by Brussels's constructive role as the state capital and its status as the main centre of the European Union, as well as by the "distinction made between *linguistic* communities and *geographical* communities"[880]. Whereas the so-called *Community councils* represent the linguistic interests of the Dutch, French and (the much smaller) German speaking groups, the *regional councils* (the federal units) are established on a strictly geographical and territorial basis on a tripartite basis -with the Brussels area having the same legal status as Wallonia and Flanders[881].

However, what interests us here is not merely to consider the relatively unique position of Czechoslovakia as a purely "bipolar" system, but more importantly, to explain why this made Czechoslovakia inherently unstable.

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[877]Mathernova, "Czecho?Slovakia", p.66; see also Leff, *National Conflict*, p.250

[878]The case of Canada is indeed more contestable, since as Mathernova herself reckons, "Canada, though consisting of ten provinces, resembles Czechoslovakia by the clear polarization and resulting controversies between the English-speaking population and the French-speaking population concentrated almost exclusively in the Quebec province" (Mathernova, "Czecho?Slovakia", p.85).

[879]See for example Stein, *Czecho/Slovakia,* p.19; Mathernova, "Czecho?Slovakia", p.66; Cutler and Schwartz, "Constitutional Reform", pp.551-552 (on the relevance of the Belgian experience for Czechoslovakia)

[880]John Fitzmaurice, *The Politics of Belgium: A Unique Federalism* (London; Hurst & Company; 1996), pp.122-123; Michael O'Neill, "Re-imagining Belgium: New Federalism and the Political Management of Cultural Diversity", *Parliamentary Affairs*, vol.51, N°2, April 1998, p.248

[881]See O'Neill, "Re-imagining", p.248; Wilfried Dewachter ("Belgique: La Déchirure", *Politique Internationale*, n°78, hiver 1997-1998, p.177-178) adopts a more pessimistic view than O'Neill on Belgian federalism, even if he acknowledges that Brussels remains (in contrast to Prague) "an important unitary institutional construction. An essentially French-speaking city situated in Flemish territory, it plays the role of a bridge" (p.178).

Bipolarity and stability of Czechoslovakia: the unbearable lightness of a dual federation

The bipolar character of the Czechoslovak state had at least three adverse effects on the stability of the country.

Firstly, bipolarity implied that the repudiation of the constitutional arrangement by one of the two constituent parts was enough to automatically put the existence of the state itself in jeopardy. As Stein put it,

> [t]he character of the Czech-Slovak state as a two-member federation posed a... complication: unlike in a multimember entity, a secession would mean the end of the federal state with direct consequences in international law and relations[882].

Secondly, and more importantly, in bipolar post-communist Czechoslovakia, there was no room for a credible and neutral mediation between Czechs and Slovaks. As discussed earlier, the federal centre, which could have played this mitigating role, became gradually powerless and was too often perceived as Czech (Prago-centric) to appear as an impartial arbiter of the Czech-Slovak disputes.

The duality of the Czechoslovak state furthermore prevented the possibility of coalition-building, which could have stabilised the country. Leff emphasised as early as 1988 that in a dual federation like Czechoslovakia,

> [t]here is no possibility of coalitional alignment with other states or republics, as would be the case in other federal systems, which might serve to mitigate the central confrontation by compromise or negotiation[883].

This made Czechoslovakia an inherently instable state, different from Yugoslavia, where Ramet shows that the process of coalition-building between the six republics and the two autonomous provinces contributed to keep in check for a long time the ethnic divisions[884].

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[882]Stein, *Czecho/Slovakia*, p.44

[883]Leff, *National Conflict*, p.251

[884]Ramet, *Nationalism*, pp. 3-18 and 270-279

Thirdly, the process of self-definition of the Czech and Slovak nations was at the root of the instability of the Czechoslovak state.

Czechoslovakia's constituent nations were bound to define themselves in opposition and contradiction to each other[885]: Slovaks came to perceive the Czechs as their "constituting Other", and vice versa[886].

Bipolarity therefore meant that Czechoslovak ethnopolitics was not merely a question of Czechs *and* Slovaks but more often of Czechs *versus* or *against* Slovaks (or Slovaks *versus* Czechs). The conflict between Czechs and Slovaks closely resembled a zero-sum game in which the success of one nation was considered to occur at the detriment of the other[887] and this made even more difficult the constitutional negotiations between Czech and Slovak representatives:

> two constituent units with divergent aspirations and political cultures are unable to find a compromise on fundamental issues of the future form of a common country. The existence of only two partners in the federation causes each constitutional issue to become overpoliticized. Consequently, all issues are typically solved at a negotiating table rather than by a rational search of optimal constitutional solutions[888].

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[885]Holy for example states that "[N)ational identity, like all other identities, is always constructed in opposition to those perceived as the Other" (Holy, *The Little Czech*, p.5). The process of self-definition of a nation by contradiction to a "constituting Other" indeed seems a rather common historical and political phenomenon: for instance, it has been argued that English and French identities are born as a consequence of the Hundred Years' Wars (see David McCrone, *The Sociology of Nationalism* (London and New York; Routledge; 1998), p. 130. See also Frederik Barth, *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: the Social Organization of Cultural Difference* (Boston; Little, Brown and Company; 1969); Donald L. Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (Berkeley; Los Angeles; London; University of California Press; 1985), p.144 and 182; Katherine Verdery, "Nationalism and National Sentiment in Post-socialist Romania", *Slavic Review*, 52, n°2, Summer 1993, pp.193-194.

[886]Although, as we have seen in chapter 4, the traditional historical and cultural "Others" of the Czechs and Slovaks are respectively the Germans and the Hungarians, during the course of their coexistence in a common state, Czechs and Slovaks increasingly perceived their national identity as each other's opposite (for a discussion of Czech images of Slovaks and of themselves, see Holy, *The Little*, p.107).

[887]in line with the notion of "mutual betrayals" (1938/ 39 and 1968) which we considered in chapter 2

[888]Mathernova, "Czecho?Slovakia", p.66

A related issue is the numerical imbalance between Czechs and Slovaks, the Czechs being twice as numerous as the Slovaks. This is in itself a recipe for instability, since it creates a dilemma between the principles of parity and proportionality. The adoption of the principle of parity is likely to provoke discontent in the larger republic: as seen in chapter 6, this could actually explain why the Czechs were more and more favourable to the division of the state after 1989.

But, similarly, applying the proportionality principle would have met with the refusal and resentment of the smaller republic, Slovakia - as the insistance of the Slovaks on the maintenance of the prohibition of majority rule (*majorizácia*) would tend to prove[889].

In Czechoslovakia, bipolarity implied that "demands for parity ran sharply counter to the significant disparity in the size of [the Czech and Slovak] populations"[890].

An alternative multipolar Czechoslovakia ?

Given the seemingly intrinsic instability of a bipolar state like Czechoslovakia[891], there are grounds to wonder whether the reorganisation of the state as a multipolar system could have effectively curbed secessionist tendencies and prevented the break-up of 1992.

Two alternative institutional multipolar structures can *a priori* be identified, one involving Slovakia's Hungarian minority and the other the possibility of a tripartite Bohemia-Moravia / Silesia- Slovakia federation.

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[889]Elster, "Transition, Constitution-making and Separation in Czechoslovakia", pp.124-125

[890]Stein, *Czecho?Slovakia*, p.302

[891]From the point of view of international relations theory, bipolarity is indeed for most writers - for instance, Morton Kaplan, Stanley Hoffman, David Singer or Karl Deutsch - associated with a high level of instability. (see for a more general idea of the debate: Sheehan, *The Balance*, p.84); Paul R. Viotti and Mark V. Kauppi, *International Relations Theory: Realism, Pluralism; Globalism*; Basingstoke, London; Macmillan; 1993, second edition; pp.53-55)

First of all, the Hungarian minority represents around 11 percent of the Slovak population, and one has to consider whether it could have acted as a "third party" in the relations between Czechs and Slovaks.

There was a possibility (if only because "one's enemy's enemy is one's friend") of coalition building between Czechs and Hungarians. The overwhelming majority of Hungarians was favourable to the maintenance of the Czechoslovak state, perceived as the most efficient protection against Slovak nationalism: for instance, "over 95 % of supporters of the main Hungarian parties declared in opinion polls that, had they been given the chance, they would have voted against the dissolution of the Czechoslovak federation"[892].

However, the Hungarian minority did not have the capacity to influence political developments in Czechoslovakia between 1989 and 1992 and was never in a position to act as a credible and respected third party.

Without negating the significance of the Hungarian counterweight to Slovak independence, Slovakia's Hungarians were only in the position of a subordinate, minor balance of power in Slovakia (by opposition to the dominant Czech-Slovak balance of power)[893]. The Hungarian minority, an "actor" of the system "Czechoslovakia" could not constitute itself as a "pole" able to effectively counterbalance the Czech and the Slovak poles

At best, there was a possible coalition of interests between Hungarians and Czechs but formalising it would have achieved little more than a slightly modified and still unstable bipolar order, Czechs and Hungarians versus Slovaks.

The second alternative, the setting up of a tripartite federation Bohemia - Moravia / Silesia-Slovakia, therefore seemed in many ways a more promising option[894].

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[892]Batt, *The New Slovakia*, p.18

[893]For a discussion of the concept of dominant and subordinate balance of powers, see Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics* (Basingstoke, London; Macmillan; 1995; 1977), p.103

[894]For a useful general discussion of the Moravian question, see Jan Obrman, *RFE /RL*, "The Issue of Autonomy for Moravia and Slovakia", RFE / Rl, April 12, 1991, pp.13-22

The proposal was based on the belief in the existence of a specific Moravian identity, distinct from the Bohemian one. For a long time during the Habsburg domination and until the end of the first World War, Bohemia and Moravia had each their own autonomous diets[895].
The idea of a tripartite federation was first evoked during the debates of the Prague Spring in 1968[896] and reemerged after 1989, especially under the influence of a newly created political party, the Movement for a Self-Governing Democracy- Association for Moravia and Silesia, who polled a surprising 7.9 percent of the votes to the House of People and 9.1 percent to the House of Nations of the Federal Assembly at the June 1990 elections[897]. The party furthermore gained 10.3 percent of the votes to the Czech National Council and briefly formed a coalition with the ruling Civic Forum[898].

The fact that in the 1991 census, 8.7 percent of the inhabitants of the Czech Republic declared their ethnic origin as "Moravian" appeared to provide further evidence of the desire of many Moravians to be recognised as distinct from the Bohemian Czechs: "35 percent of the Czech-speaking residents in the two regions... which correspond to the historical Lands of Moravia and Silesia, declared themselves Moravians or Silesians in 1991 (The latter made up only 1.1 percent of the total)"[899].

This sense of Moravian identity -*moravanstvi*[900] (Moravism)- has been said to be characterised by the higher impact of the Catholic religion in Moravia[901], as well as by the

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[895]Michel, *La mémoire*, p.124

[896]See for example Gordon Skilling, *Czechoslovakia's Interrupted Revolution*, pp.470-474; Galia Golan, *Reform Rule in Czechoslovakia, The Dubček Era, 1968-1969* (Cambridge; Cambridge University Press; 1973), p.197

[897]Wolchik, *Czechoslovakia in Transition*, p.52

[898]*ibid.*, p.74

[899] Krejčí and Machonin, *Czechoslovakia, 1918-1992*, p.52

[900]Wehrlé, *Le Divorce*, p.81

[901]In this respect, Moravia could appear as a bridge between Bohemia and Slovakia. See Sharon L.Wolchik, *Czechoslovakia in Transition*, pp.212-215; Michel, *La Mémoire*, p.126; Stein, *Czecho/Slovakia*, p.119

importance of Brno - second town of the Czech Republic (389 824 inhabitants in 1994) and only slightly smaller than Bratislava, with its 449 000 inhabitants (in 1993)[902]- as an economic and cultural centre[903].

At the beginning of 1991, several demonstrations were held in Moravian towns, demanding the creation of a tripartite federation, in which Moravia would stand as a partner of Bohemia and Slovakia[904].

However, the idea faced the criticisms of both Czech and Slovak leaders.

Among the Czech politicians, the support for the proposal was at best lukewarm and marked by a willingness not to hurt Slovak susceptibilities (that was for example the case of Havel and the Christian Democrats), but much more often overtly hostile. Jan Kalvoda, deputy chairman of the Czech National Council, thus considered demands for a tripartite federation as a "step back, against the trend towards integration of Europe"[905]. There was among many Czechs the feeling that Moravia was too similar, both linguistically and culturally, to Bohemia to legitimate its constitution as a third republic in Czechoslovakia.

Similarly, the Slovaks equally rejected the idea, because it would, according to them, only increase the power of the Czechs in the state: in a tripartite arrangement, Slovakia was bound to be constantly outvoted by what would be in essence two "Czech" republics[906]. As Čalfa once stated, "Slovaks would probably consider that by elevating Moravia and Silesia to a republic, their own status as a nation had been degraded"[907].

Even if a tripartite federation had constituted a possible and credible alternative to the bipolar arrangement, the absence of major cross-cutting interests between, say, Moravia and

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[902]Figures in OECD report, *Politiques et Problèmes Régionaux en République Tchèque et en République Slovaque* (Paris; OECD; 1996), p.136 and p.50

[903]Brno is the fourth industrial region of the Czech Republic (after Prague, Ostrava and the mining region of North Bohemia), but it is also an important cultural centre, with for instance six universities or establishments of higher education. (OECD, *Politiques et problèmes Régionaux,* p.136)

[904]See for example Stein, *Czecho/Slovakia*, p.120; Wolchik, *Czechoslovakia in Transition*, p.57

[905]CTK, Feb.3 1991 in Stein, *Czecho/Slovakia*, p.120

[906]F.Kinsky, "La Reconstruction", p.69

[907]As quoted in Eric Stein, *Czecho/Slovakia*, p.120

Slovakia, would have significantly hindered its functioning. The traditional links between Bohemia and Moravia were likely to make from a tripartite arrangement no more than a new form of dual federation, a *de facto* bipolar system characterised by a divide Bohemia and Moravia versus Slovakia. As Jon Elster put it,

> [T]he idea [of a three-state federation of Bohemia, Moravia and Slovakia] came to nothing, probably because it was clear that on all important issues these smaller republics would align themselves so as to reconstitute the Czech-Slovak divide. Moravia and Slovakia, for instance, had hardly any substantive interests in common[908].

Moreover, on top of being rejected by most Czech and Slovak post-communist leaders, it is doubtful whether the so-called Moravism could be considered to be anything more than an expression of regionalism (by opposition to Czech and Slovak nationalisms[909]).
The manifestations of "Moravism" after 1989 were intended more as a form of opposition to the "centralising tendency of the Prague government"[910] than as a genuine "nationalist" feeling. The electoral fortunes of the Association for Moravia and Silesia - who did not manage to regain representation in the Federal Assembly during the second parliamentary elections of June 1992 and only attracted 6 percent of the votes to the Czech National Council - would seem to confirm this impression.
Even a Moravian "sympathiser" like Milan Kundera, in an article of 1968, dismissed the reality of Moravian identity in the following terms:

> I have asked myself the question of the specificity of Moravian art. I have experienced a period of a certain moravism [*moravanství*], even if I considered it to be rather like a game. Moravism is a beautiful game which rests on memories[911].

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[908]Elster,"Transition, constitution-making and separation in Czechoslovakia", pp.124-125

[909]See chapter 6

[910] Krejčí and Machonin, *Czechoslovakia, 1918-92*, p.52

[911]Milan Kundera, "Trialog o zemi moravské a o Brne", *Host do domu*, 1968, 7, p.32, quoted in Michel, *La Mémoire*, p.126 [emphasis added]

The prospects for the successful establishment of a tripartite Czechoslovak federation accordingly looked rather grim. Moravia could arguably be an "actor" in the Czechoslovak system, but it could not aspire to the status of autonomous "pole".

It seems therefore that neither the Hungarian minority of Slovakia nor the creation of a tripartite federation including Moravia alongside Bohemia and Slovakia could constitute the basis for a transformation of the Czechoslovak state into a multipolar system. Neither of these two options provided a realistic way to "escape" the inherent instability of a bipolar arrangement.

Bipolarity and break-up of the Czechoslovak state

However, if "[a] bipartite federation has a tendency to sharpen the polarisation"[912], it was also paradoxically one the factors that allowed the peaceful character of the Czech-Slovak divorce.
This link between bipolarity and the possibility of a "velvet divorce" could be established on two grounds.

Firstly, as a comparison of the break-up of Czechoslovakia with the violent disintegration of multi-polar Yugoslavia would tend to prove, the "universal" actor, the federal centre, tends to wither away more easily in a tight bipolar system than in a "balance of power" system. The "centre" does not usually have the means and the legitimacy to use force to maintain the integrity of the state[913].
The rapid erosion of the role of the Czechoslovak federal institutions between 1990 and 1992 noted earlier appears to corroboratc this point.

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[912]Jacques Rupnik, "The Break-Up of Czechoslovakia", in Cleese and Kortunov, *The Political and Strategic Implications*, p.268

[913]See chapter 7

Similarly, a multipolar state fitting the "balance of power" model[914] might have certain stabilising features[915], but the ethnopolitics of such states, as the examples of Yugoslavia and to a lesser extent the Soviet Union appear to demonstrate, might be more complex and potentially more disruptive if and when the equilibrium of the internal balance of power comes to be destroyed.

Another analogy with the international system might in this context be relevant: whereas the end of the European multipolar balances of power of the nineteenth century was marked by two world wars, the end of the bipolar system of the Cold War took place in an altogether peaceful way and was overwhelmingly free of large-scale "violence".

In fact, in line with systemic balance of power theory as developed by Kenneth Waltz[916] or John Mearsheimer, a bipolar system is "stable", provided stability is understood -in a reductionist sense- as the absence of war in the system.

A bipolar system is "characterised by high levels of certainty and predictability. As the number of key actors increases then, by the same token, certainty and predictability decrease. In a bipolar system the enemy is easy to recognise, the issues are clearer, alliance patterns are simpler, there is only one other culture and political system that has to be monitored and understood, interdependence is low..."[917].

For all these reasons, the bipolar nature of the Czechoslovak state is a useful notion, which serves to explain both the "event" of the break-up and its peaceful character.

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[914]here in Kaplan's definition of "balance of power" as merely one possible form of international system

[915]As Ramet shows in her study of Yugoslavia *(Nationalism)*

[916]Kenneth Waltz argues that "[u]ncertainties about who threatens whom, about who will oppose whom, and about who will gain or lose from the actions other states accelerate as the number of states increases.Even if one assumes that the goals of most states are worthy, the timing and content of the actions required to teach them become more and more difficult to calculate...In multipolar systems there are too many powers to permit any of them to draw clear and fixed lines between allies and adversaries and too few to keep the effects of defection low. With three or more powers flexibility of alliances keeps relations of friendship and enmity fluid and makes everyone's estimate of the present ansd future relation of forces uncertain...In a bipolar world uncertainty lessens and calculations are easier to make" (*Theory*, pp.165 and 168).

[917]Sheehan, *The Balance*, p.197

Conclusion

As a conclusion, the systemic approach and the conception of the Czechoslovak state as a "system" can provide a different insight on the break-up of Czechoslovakia.

The bi-polar post-communist Czechoslovak state was to an extent structurally, "systematically", unstable: in a dual (and by 1989, democratised and genuine) federation, there was no possibility of mediation of the Czech-Slovak conflicts and Czechoslovak ethnopolitics commonly took the shape of a disruptive "us" (Czechs or Slovaks) versus "them" (the "Other" constituent nation of the state).
Moreover, the transformation of Czechoslovakia into a more stable "multi-polar" structure - either through the constitution of the Hungarian minority as a "third" part or the creation of a tripartite federation, with Moravia/ Silesia alongside Bohemia and Slovakia - always remained a remote and unrealistic political option.
As every "system", Czechoslovakia was dynamic and the fragile equilibrium of the balance of power between the two constituent Czech and Slovak nations gradually evolved.

During the interwar period, the Slovaks had a subordinate status in the unitary, centralist First republic. They were formally recognised as part of the state-founding "Czechoslovak" nation but the then 2.5 million Slovaks largely lived under the domination of the more numerous and more politically and economically advanced Czechs[918].
Moreover, Czechoslovakia was between 1918 and its first disintegration in 1939, a multinational state, in which the 3-million strong German minority had arguably more impact than the Slovaks on the elaboration of the domestic and foreign policy of the state.

It is only after 1945 and the expulsion of the Sudeten Germans that there are "theoretical" grounds to define Czechoslovakia as a "bipolar" state, characterised by the overwhelmingly dominant Czech-Slovak cleavage.
However, from 1948 to 1989, the communist regime -thanks to a mixture of coercion and "divide-to-rule" policies - effectively managed to put a lid on ethnopolitics in

[918] See chapter 1

Czechoslovakia. The federalisation of January 1969 institutionalised the polarisation between Czech and Slovak republics, but without any significant effect on the "internal balance of power" of what was in reality still a centralist state, marked by the power monopoly of the (non-federalised) Communist party.

The "velvet revolution" therefore abruptly changed the nature of the Czechoslovak "internal balance of power" and the duality of the state, purely formal and ceremonial under the communist regime, became a reality.
The two "national actors", Czechs and Slovaks, then logically began to assert their autonomy vis-à-vis the "universal actor", the federal centre.

Perhaps more importantly, as seen in chapters 6 and 7, certain political leaders like Mečiar and Klaus, came to have a vested political stake in modifying the "internal balance of power" of the state. They were successfully able to use the institutions of the dual federation to erode the powers of the "universal actor". In many respects, post-communist Czech and Slovak politicians had no interest in the maintenance of the constitutional and institutional *status quo*.
Mečiar's nationalist-populist ideology, as well as the Czech nationalism in neo-liberal disguise of Klaus[919], converged on one single common denominator: the break-up of the Czechoslovak state was possible, and indeed beneficial to their political "causes".
By the time of the parliamentary elections of June 1992 and the highly symbolic resignation of Havel from the federal presidency in July, the instability of the bipolar Czechoslovakia had become too serious to avoid a "velvet divorce".

The "internal balance of power" approach thus allows us to shed a new light on the role of leadership in the break-up of Czechoslovakia.
The failure of the constitutional negotiations between Czechs and Slovaks can partly be explained by the bipolarity of the state, which made it more difficult to reach a viable political agreement. The decisions of the Czech and Slovak post-communist leaders did not take place in a vacuum, and this chapter shows how the political and institutional structure of

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[919] See chapter 6

the Czechoslovak state - its bipolar or dual character - probably conditioned and constrained their actions, in practice considerably limiting the range of options available to them.

Because of the bipolar arrangement that characterised the state, the most beneficial way for Czech and Slovak politicians to enhance their fortunes in post-communist Czechoslovakia was to consistently appear as defenders and supporters of the interests of the Czech and Slovak poles, and there was no powerful "Czechoslovak" constituency able to moderate the clash between them.
Because of the weakening of the centre, which lost its status of pole and potential mediator, Czechs and Slovaks were left to face one another in a "zero-sum" game which proved lethal to the integrity of Czechoslovakia - even if the predictable character of the Czech-Slovak confrontation helped the engineering of a non-violent "velvet divorce".
This chapter has, by applying the determinism of a system analogous to the balance of power, contended that the systemic structure of Czechoslovakia had an impact on the outcome of the Czech-Slovak conflict between 1989 and 1992, when the Czechoslovak state became clearly marked by bipolarity. However, the bipolarity of the state should clearly be considered as only one among the several causes of the break-up examined in this dissertation and the use of systemic balance of power theory is not incompatible with the recognition of the decisive role of leadership in the division of Czechoslovakia. As Inis L.Claude put it, "balance of power caters for the sovereignty of the statesmen, giving him full scope for shrewdness and skill and artistry"[920]. The political actions of Czech and Slovak post-communist leaders - most significantly, the gradual diminution of the influence of Havel and the failure of Klaus and Mečiar to agree on a constitutional compromise- were to an extent conditioned by the inherent stability of the state but it does not exonerate them from their responsibilities in the break-up of Czechoslovakia.

The conclusion therefore turns to a general assessment of the possible explanations for the dissolution of the Czechoslovak state, and their relative impact on the events of 1989-1992.

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[920]Inis L. CLaude, Jr., "The Balance of Power Revisited", *Review of International Studies*, 1989 (15), p.81

CONCLUSION
THE RESISTIBLE FALL OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA AND THE POLITICAL USES OF NATIONAL SELF-DETERMINATION

> It is possible to feel better in bad times than in the good kind. Tyranny binds people together whereas freedom distracts them by holding out opportunities to them
>
> Ivan Klíma, *The Ultimate Intimacy*[921]

This thesis has sought to provide a multifaceted account of the break-up of Czechoslovakia and has examined several possible explanations for the split of 1992.
It has attempted to challenge traditional interpretations and argued that the velvet divorce was not the ineluctable result of historical, political-cultural and economic differences between Czechs and Slovaks and that the international environment played only a supporting role in the events of 1989-1992 -determining the peaceful character of the division of the state more than the division itself.

There were undoubtedly some deep-rooted misunderstandings and tensions between the two nations, and the so-called Slovak question periodically recurred at critical moments and turning points of the (troubled) history of Czechoslovakia: most significantly perhaps, in 1938/39, 1945 and 1968.
Yet, after the velvet revolution of 1989 and the collapse of communism, Czechs and Slovaks had perhaps a better chance than ever before (certainly better than in 1918, 1945 and 1968) to reach a viable understanding as far as the nature and institutional form of their coexistence within a Czechoslovak state were concerned.
The communist-engineered federation could have been replaced by a working and "democratic" federation, freely negotiated and supported by Czech and Slovak leaders.
The international environment, as we saw earlier, was probably more favourable than at any time before.

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[921] Ivan Klíma, *The Ultimate Intimacy* (London; Granta Books; 1997), p.152

The long-standing economic differential between the Czech lands and Slovakia had been considerably reduced and, by 1989, the Slovaks could even claim to have overtaken the Czechs on certain important indicators (such as educational achievements).
More generally (and more controversially), by 1989, there was a visible pattern of convergence of Czech and Slovak political cultures and societies and the enduring Czech-slovak "dualism" appeared to a large extent on the verge of being bridged. In Jiří Musil's words,

> the two societies, at the time of the split, had substantially more in common -at least in sociostructural terms- than they had had at the time of Czechoslovakia's formation. At the beginning of the 1990s, both featured similar economic and social structures, and demographic behaviour, and nearly identical legal, technical and educational systems. Slovakia's level of urbanization approached that of the Czech Lands and economic interdependence was very high[922].

Finally, Czechoslovakia was in many respects in a better position than most of the other countries of the Soviet bloc to embark with success on its democratic transition and its "return to Europe". Its economic situation was more similar to that of East Germany than to that of Romania and Bulgaria, and its basic macroeconomic indicators were far sounder than those of its Central European neighbours Poland and Hungary (characterised by a low inflation and foreign debt). The country furthermore benefited from an outstanding international image boosted by the popularity and moral authority of its new president, the former dissident and playwright Václav Havel.

As in 1945 and 1968, the resurgence of the Slovak question in 1989 did not imply that separation was the option favoured by the Czech and Slovak population and what conditioned the events of 1989-1992 was therefore much more accidental than usually acknowledged in the literature.

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[922]Jiří Musil, "Czech and Slovak Society", in Musil, *The End*, p.77; See also Henderson and Robinson (eds), *Post-Communist Politics*, p.238.

The break-up was not inevitable and could instead be seen as the "price of freedom"[923] and the consequence of the interaction of several "ideologies" which competed for influence in post-1989 Czechoslovakia: communism, populism, neoliberalism and "antipolitics".

First of all, as discussed in chapter 8, the economic, political, semantic and institutional legacies of the communist era had a deeply negative impact on the abilities of the Czech and Slovak elites and populations to agree on a new constitutional arrangement.
Under communism, Czechs and Slovaks were never in the position to overcome the historical misunderstandings which resulted from the "Czechoslovakism" of the first interwar republic and Czech-Slovak relations were, as a result, marred by the absence of serious debates about the past and the thread of "mutual betrayals" which ran throughout the seven decades of the two nations' coexistence.

Secondly, the populism of Vladimír Mečiar, the most influential figure in Slovak politics, played up and exacerbated these tensions by exploiting the perception of many Slovaks that their interests were not protected enough in the common state. In the context of the social hardships experienced by the Slovaks after 1989, this was a winning political and electoral strategy, and it was (somewhat logically) matched on the Czech side by the neo-liberal and Thatcherite rhetoric of Václav Klaus. The Civic Democratic Party and its coalition partner the Civic Democratic Alliance appealed to the Czechs who thought that staying with what they considered to be the "backward" Slovaks would unnecessarily delay the long overdue (re)integration of their nation in mainstream Western European structures and institutions[924].

Finally, the commitment to "antipolitics" of former dissidents like Havel was certainly laudable and was probably a factor which allowed the divorce to be called "velvet". Yet, the post-communist dissident elites missed the significance of the Slovak question and did too little, too late to address the issue[925]. The small window of opportunity which tentatively

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[923]It is the title of a book by Piotr Wandycz (*The Price of Freedom: A History of East Central Europe from the Middle Ages to the Present*; London and New York; Routledge; 1993, 1992)

[924]See pp.239-242

[925]See p.204

existed in the immediate aftermath of the "velvet revolution" to try to draft a new federal constitution was not seized by the former dissidents-turned-policy makers.
Combined with the systemic instability generated by the bipolarity of a state in which politics became ethnicised and reduced to a zero-sum game between Czechs and Slovaks, this made for a dangerous mix which exploded when the lid that communism had put for more than forty years on civil society and political expression was suddenly opened.

The paradoxical aspects of the process which led the National Assembly to vote to dissolve Czechoslovakia on November 25 1992 (by a majority of only four votes and after two attempts) are nevertheless evident.

On the one hand, the Czechs' desire to continue with the tight and "centralist" federation was opposed by the Slovaks, overwhelmingly favourable to a looser and more confederative form of union. While the Slovaks increasingly campaigned for a higher visibility on the domestic and international stage, the Czechs had traditionally equated "Czechoslovak" and "Czech" and had consequently never developed a strong and genuine attachment to a multi (bi)national conception of the state.
Yet, on the other hand, both Czechs and Slovaks consistently supported the maintenance of the common state, a fact that the "technocratic" politicians who swept to power after the parliamentary elections of June 1992 chose to ignore.

Klaus and Mečiar are also considered to have widely contrasting political personalities: the "erudite economist...with an exceptional intellect" against "the man who behaved like a village farmer...with an inclination towards melancholic paranoia"[926].
It is however the common points between the two men which appeared striking. Klaus and Mečiar were rational actors. Their political leadership was based on pragmatism and they adopted ideas and positions which suited their "electoral" interests.
In *Politics without a Past: the absence of History in postcommunist nationalism*, Shari Cohen analyses the historical background of Slovak post-communist politics and argues that the main problem for Slovak society is not nationalism but, on the contrary, the absence of a

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[926]Karol Wolf, *Podruhé a naposled*, p.62

coherent and unifying ideology. In this context, the success of a politician like Mečiar can be explained by his lack of commitment to any specific view of the world. A population which, as a result of the communist socialisation process, was "not equipped or inclined to try to assess the validity of politicians' claims" adopted the politics of opportunism and voted for the politicians who "reflected a society that was just like them"[927].

This was most evidently illustrated by the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia's 1992 electoral platform which rejected both full-fledged independence and the existing federal structure and put forward instead the rather ambiguous and vague notion of "sovereignty"[928]. Even the leaders of the Slovak National Party, a priori the most genuinely "nationalist" of Slovak political forces seemed far from primarily concerned with the defence of the interests of Slovakia. Jozef Matula, the first general secretary of the party, openly admitted: "I do not believe in nationalism, nation or things like that. I believe in power and influence"[929].

But Cohen's analysis could also be applied to Klaus because the extent of the Czech reformer's commitment to neoliberalism was highly debatable. The well-documented discrepancy between Klaus's hardline neo-liberal rhetoric and his actual policies (markedly more concerned with the social aspects of the economic transition and perhaps therefore not necessarily very different from Mečiar's approach) illustrates how Klaus was prepared to sacrifice his economic convictions to the ultimate goal of gaining and staying in power[930]. Like Mečiar in Slovakia, Klaus was successful because, for a long time, he said and, more importantly perhaps, did what the Czech population wanted: a promise of prosperity based on an economic reform "high" on rhetoric but "low" on unemployment.

Both politicians rose to power in similar circumstances. After having started their career in the "broad churches" of Civic Forum and Public Against Violence, they built their success on their distrust of intellectuals like Havel, Pithart or Dienstbier and their willingness to create their own Western-style and organisationally-efficient political parties.

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[927]S.Cohen, *Politics without a Past*, p.21

[928]See pp. 184-186

[929]quoted in K.Wolf, *Podruhé a naposled*, p.21

[930]For a discussion of this, see Robin H.E.Shepherd, *Czechoslovakia: The velvet revolution and Beyond* (Basingstoke, London; Macmillan Press; 2000), pp.89-95.

It could of course be argued that Klaus and Mečiar were the products of historical traditions and tendencies which were bound to lead to the dissolution of the Czechoslovak state. Created in the name of the self-determination of a fictional "Czechoslovak" nation, the common state collapsed when other politicians, in Slovakia and in the Czech republic, decided to further their electoral position by invoking the right of self-determination of the Czech and Slovak nations.

The problem is however that, as President Eduard Beneš contended in 1939:

> [t]he principle of self-determination itself would need very detailed and precise explanation. It was misused and continues to be misused in an incredible degree. Everybody gives to it the interpretation that serves his political interests and aims[931] .

In 1992, national self-determination came, according to the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia and the Slovak National Party, to mean "independence" but this thesis has attempted to demonstrate that the creation of two independent states in the middle of Europe was not the result of the predetermined failure of state-building.

Klaus and Mečiar, like Milosevic and Tudjman in Serbia and Croatia and Yeltsin in Russia, used the concept of national self-determination to justify their decision to divide the state and there were clearly some long-term historical and economic grievances (real or perceived) which gave them the leverage to do so and made their arguments appealing and credible among a certain part of the Czech and Slovak population.

Yet, ultimately, like in Yugoslavia (if under infinitely less tragic circumstances), it is only the mobilisation of these latent feelings by unscrupulous elites which could provoke and did provoke the break-up of the state[932].

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[931] Edvard Beneš, *Democracy Today and Tomorrow* (London; Macmillan; 1939), p.121.

[932] National self-determination has also worryingly become the slogan of separatist movements in Western countries such as Belgium, Canada, Italy and the United Kingdom. Leaders of the Vlaams Blok in Belgium and Lega Nord in Italy have for instance seen the velvet divorce as a path to follow. The 1995 electoral platform of the Vlaams Blok argued that the "Belgian state is a historical mistake...We want a separation and a division on the Czechoslovak model" and the authors of a pamphlet *The Project of a Flemish State* (Project Vlaamse Staat) published in May 1998, applauded the "quick, democratically legitimate" break-up of Czechoslovakia. In June 1996, the chairman of the Lega Nord, Umberto Bossi, declared: "it's time to choose the Czechoslovakian way...Let us divide the country" (Dewaechter, "Belgique", p.180; Interview with Gerolf Annemans, Luk Van Nieuwenhuysen and Karim Van Overmeire on the Vlaams Blok website, http://www.vlaams-blok/project.html; John Newhouse, *Europe Adrift*, New York, Pantheon Books, 1997, p.69)

Despite the alarming forecasts of 1990-1992, the economic consequences of the break-up have been limited. The economic transitions in the Czech republic and Slovakia have certainly not run smoothly and the Czech "miracle" came to a less than glorious end in 1997, but it is hard to believe that the situation would have been significantly brighter had Czechoslovakia survived.
Similarly, there are continuing uncertainties about the application for EU membership of the two countries but it seems equally impossible to attribute them to the break-up of 1992.

One of the major causes and the most disheartening consequence of the "velvet divorce", however, is the parochialism and "provincialism" which have often become predominant in Slovak but also Czech politics.
This was evident in the increasingly authoritarian rule of Mečiar and the relative worsening of the position of the Hungarian minority after the birth of independent Slovakia but could also be illustrated in the Czech republic by the widespread anti-Romany racism among the population. Xenophobia is of course unfortunately, to paraphrase Descartes, "the best distributed commodity in the world" and Czechs and Slovaks are not uniquely intolerant. Yet, there are grounds to believe that the creation of two (more) ethnically homogenous nation-states would increase rather than decrease these human tendencies.

This dissertation argues that the break-up of Czechoslovakia was ultimately the product of an elite deal between Mečiar's Movement for a Democratic Slovakia and Klaus's Civic Democratic Party. The deal need not be seen as the consequence of the nature of the common state or irreconcilable differences between Czechs and Slovaks, but resulted from the unique conjunction after 1989 of several factors: the hardships of the economic transition, the legacies of communist-style federalism, the political immaturity of the Czech and Slovak populations, the malignity of "professional" politicians and the naïveté of the former dissident elite.

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01/09 : Robert Prachar (Institut für den Donauraum und Mitteleuropa)
01:09 : Professor Rainer Bauböck (Institut für Höhere Studien)

in Bratislava:

02/09: Petr Matula and Kamil Homola (spokesmen Democratic Union)
03/09: Professor Grigorij Mesežnikov (Institut pre Verejne Otazky)
07/09: Michal Kováč, former president of the Slovak republic (Foundation Michal Kováč and Václav Havel)
07/09: Jan Sikuta (National legal officer, United Nations High Commissioner for refugees)
08/09: Róbert Kotian (journalist, SME)

in Prague:

13/09: Dr Michal Klíma (Department of Political Science, Prague University of Economics)
13/09: Professor Bohumil Doležal (Department of Political Science, Charles University Prague)
13/09: Professor Jiří Večerník (Institute of Sociology, Czech Academy of Sciences)
14/09: Dr Jana Reschová (Department of Political Science, Prague University of Economics)
14/09: Professor Antoine Marès (Centre Français de Recherche en Sciences Sociales)
15/09: Dr Petr Drulák (Jan Masaryk Centre, Prague University of Economics)
16/09: Dr Jiří Suk (Institute for Contemporary History, Czech Academy of Sciences)
16/09: Dr Zdenka Mansfeldová (Institute of Sociology, Czech Academy of Sciences)
17/09: Radim Procházka (journalist, Czech TV)